

Class 232.3R

Book S:58

General Theological Seminary Library

Chelsea Square, New York

PRESENTED BY

Soc'y for Promoting Religion and Learning

THE LAYMAN'S LIBRARY

Edited by F. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.B.A., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, and Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's College, London, Reader at the Temple Church.

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net each Volume.

- ✓ THE FAITH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By the Rev. ALEXANDER NAIRNE, M.A., B.D., Professor of Hebrew and Exegesis of the Old Testament at King's College, London. With a Preface by F. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.B.A., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.
- ✓ WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? OR REDEMPTION. A Study in the Doctrine of Atonement. By the Rev. J. G. SIMPSON, D.D., Canon and Precentor of St. Paul's.
- SOME ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS CHRIST. A Comparative Study of Faiths in Divine Incarnation. By JOHN LESLIE JOHNSTON, M.A., Fellow and Dean of Arts, Magdalen College, late Lecturer in Theology at New College, Oxford.
- ✓ THE TEACHING OF CHRIST. An Attempt to Appreciate the Main Lineaments of the Teaching of Christ in their Historical Proportion. By the Rev. EDWARD GORDON SELWYN, M.A., Warden of Radley, formerly Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London.
- PRINCIPLES OF CHURCHMANSHIP. By the Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's College, London, Reader at the Temple Church.
- CHURCH AND STATE. An Historical Sketch of the Church of England in its Relations with the State. By DOUGLAS EYRE, B.A., Barrister-at-Law.
- THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. By the Rev. PETER GREEN, M.A., Canon of Manchester.
- ✓ DISCOVERY AND REVELATION. By the Rev. HAROLD FRANCIS HAMILTON, D.D., Professor of Pastoral Theology, Bishop's College, Lennoxville, Canada, 1907-10.
- THE CHURCH IN HISTORY. A Study of its Continuity, Development, and Influence. By the Rev. ERIC MILNER-WHITE, M.A., Chaplain of King's College, Cambridge, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London.
- THE HOLY SPIRIT. By the Rev. A. E. J. RAWLINSON, M.A., Lecturer in Theology and Classics at Christ Church, Oxford, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield; formerly Tutor of Keble College.

Other Volumes are in Preparation and in Contemplation.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA.

✓ Caillard. The church & the new knowledge.

THE LAYMAN'S LIBRARY

Edited by F. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.B.A.,
*Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the
University of Cambridge,*

and the REV. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A.,
*Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's
College, London, Reader at the Temple
Church.*

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

' May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation !'

Browning's *Christmas Eve*.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

OR

REDEMPTION

A Study in
the Doctrine of Atonement

BY

J. G. SIMPSON

CANON AND PRECENTOR OF
ST. PAUL'S

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1914

All rights reserved

232.3 R

Si 58.

66367

THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
CONGRESS

D 23 '19

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. A GENERAL SURVEY	1
II. WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ?	25
III. THE MEANING OF THE EVANGELICAL CHRIST	53
IV. WHAT THE APOSTLES PREACHED	107
V. JUSTIFICATION	137
VI. WHAT IS SIN ?	163
VII. GOD IN THE SINNER'S STEAD	186
VIII. SALVATION IN THE CHURCH	212

I

A GENERAL SURVEY

THE subject of this book is not by any means an easy one. If any reader thinks that he may reach its meaning by casually fingering its pages, he had much better lay it down. It is intended for those who are really seeking truth, and who are seriously asking themselves the question, How can I be a Christian in the modern world? One thing, at least, is certain, that we must be at pains to discover what Christianity really is. Popular notions are not necessarily good theology, which, like every other science, grows. Nothing is easier than to go on living in a vague atmosphere of Christian sentiment without ever having laid hold on the vital thing that came into the world with Jesus Christ. We may go on from day to day supposing that we are Christians, because we have never professed any other religion than that which is identified with the churches and ministers, which are part of the

fabric of our social life. We have been accustomed in a general sort of way to connect the name of Christ with all our ideas of what is good, until the word 'Christian' almost comes to stand for what our higher instincts approve, and 'un-Christian' for what our better selves condemn. But whether Christ came into the world to teach us something, or to do something for us, or to manifest something to us—these are questions about which we have never had any clear ideas at all. If we had ever studied the Bible in a rational and consecutive way, we should have known better. We should have discovered that the Christians of the first age were trying to tell us that in Jesus of Nazareth they had encountered a personality, which gave them what they had not found elsewhere. We should have realised that for them, as for their intelligent successors in later ages, Christianity was a specific thing, and not a mere summary of all that is holy and just and good. St. Paul, for example, makes it quite clear to those who will take the trouble to understand his language, that he was a man of quick conscience, and high ideals, and noble views of God long before that strange event which happened on the road to Damascus, and

gave a new centre to his life and thought. He was brought up under the wonderful Law of Moses. And none knew better than he that God had not left Himself without witness among the nations of the earth, but that the Gentiles, though they had not the Hebrew Law, nevertheless had written on their hearts those weighty truths of righteousness, which the Law revealed. But for all that Christ came into his life and changed it. If the Bible is not familiar to us as household words (and how comparatively small is the acquaintance with its contents which may be taken for granted in nine out of ten among the men and women of to-day!), then, when general knowledge and reflection come, we stand to part with a faith, which we have never really held because its true scope has never been brought home to us. This will be the more likely to happen if we go on supposing that such religious ideas, as we may happen to possess, necessarily correspond to sound theology.

Now this book is addressed to people, and I believe the number of them is increasing, who instinctively recognise that the hope of the world is really bound up with Christianity, and who yet feel that they do not know enough of what this

Faith really is to enable them rationally to understand why nothing else can take its place, or why we may not cherish those gains which historically have come to the human race along this road, while assigning to Christianity no higher value than belongs to every channel by which the world's education has been carried forward.

So we begin by asking the question, which will form the subject of the next chapter—What is the Gospel? It is, of course, matter of common knowledge that the Christian Faith has always been called the Gospel. The terms are synonymous. And this fact, to begin with, ought to put us on the track of its unique character. It has always claimed to be 'good news,' 'tidings of comfort and joy,' as the Christmas carol expresses it. If it loses this character, it ceases to be itself. It is a message to mankind, and therefore must involve something which is not 'as old as creation,' and which is not mere morality or even mere religion. St. Paul said, 'How can they hear without a preacher?' He meant that you cannot resolve the faith of a Christian into principles of religion and morality already known. Its wonder and its power have never consisted in the fact that it provides us with the

most splendid combination or presentation of these principles that mankind has ever seen, or indeed can see. It involves an event, an action, a fact, which can only come into human knowledge by being announced, reported, proclaimed.

In its briefest form the subject of Christian preaching is Christ. First of all, then, it is personal. That is why the subject of Christian theology is the Person of Christ. It does not matter who Muhammad was, but what he taught. While it is infinitely important to know what Jesus Christ said, if we are to gain a full understanding of who He is, our 'good news' concerns Himself. But persons only matter to us, because of the relations which they hold with us. You may say, if you like, that what a man is is vastly more important than what he does. Quite true. Yet persons only become known, only become available for us, in their actions. To distinguish between what people are and what they do is a false dichotomy, if it is anything more than a logical device. A person only becomes himself in what he does, so that his personality may be said to be summed up in his history. So the Gospel is the proclamation of what Christ has

done, or does, for us. Jesus Christ brings us to God. In Him we find an active God approaching us, and drawing us into communion with Himself.

The reply may be made that this is to assume in the premises what you hope to reach in the conclusion. The Godhead of Jesus is an ecclesiastical doctrine, and we must not be asked to begin by assuming it. But this is not what we are attempting to do when we speak of God approaching us in Jesus Christ. When men lay hold of Christ, they find themselves in possession of a religion. And religion, as distinguished from a moral system on the one hand and a philosophy of life on the other, is a channel through which mankind believes that it enters into fellowship with God. It is the essential experience of the Christian disciple that he reaches this communion through Christ. And the Gospel is the joyful proclamation of this fact. We are not, therefore, anticipating theological dogma, but rather asserting the religious basis on which this rests when we maintain that it is characteristic of the Faith that in Jesus Christ God finds man and man responds to God.

But we cannot stop here. You have not got

the whole of the Christian fact unless you see that the Christian religion is the religion of the Cross. It is too late in the day to distinguish between Christ and Calvary. Look at the Four Gospels, and you see at once that every one of them leads up to the Passion, which occupies a wholly disproportionate place in the narrative of each unless it is the climax of all. Examine the epistles of St. Paul, and you see that the reason why he has so little to say about the earthly life of the Lord is not at all because he is indifferent to the historical Jesus and cherishes only a 'Christ of experience' revealed in the spiritual life of the believer. What he emphasises is the Gospel of 'Christ crucified,' a cardinal fact, which is as hard, as concrete, and as historical as any one of the events recorded by the evangelists. To St. Peter, whether we think of the sermons reported in the earlier chapters of Acts or of the epistles which bear his name,¹ it is always the Cross which is the crisis of his Master's action, and either nullifies or consummates His mission. The same is true of the writings which tradition connects with the personality of St.

¹ 2 Peter is, of course, not now usually supposed to be the work of the apostle, but this does not affect the argument.

John.¹ We have already spoken of the Fourth Gospel. But the Book of Revelation and the First Epistle are no less clear in describing Him, who is the channel of fellowship with God, as 'the Lamb that was slain,' whose 'Blood' fits us for that heavenly communion. And when we pass from the canon of Scripture to the evidence of Christian institutions, again we discover that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion have always been so closely associated with the Death of Christ as to derive their significance from it. Nor can a religion, the symbol of which has ever been the Cross, be considered otherwise than as finding its true centre of unity in the Act which that Cross represents. The Cross is the symbol of Christianity.

The Gospel, therefore, is the message of fellowship with God through Christ crucified. The intellectual problem of Christianity in every age is to reinterpret this Gospel in terms which the age can understand. However the Faith may be expressed, these three factors—God, Christ, the Cross—must be constant. And that is why the present volume appears with the subtitle *Redemp-*

¹ I do not wish to express critical objections to his authorship. Take it as you please.

tion. That is the word which has always been used to express the establishment of personal relations with God through the Cross. Another term commonly employed to express the same idea is taken from the Authorised Version of the Epistle to the Romans (v. 11). This is the word Atonement, which, however, disappears in the Revised Version. It is a mistake to press the etymology of either word. Atonement, of course, means 'at-one-ment,' and does not necessarily convey any idea of the means by which the union between God and man is effected. Redemption strictly means 'buying back,' and may be made to express too much if it is thought necessary to insist upon the notion of a price paid. But both words in popular usage sufficiently express the idea which it is intended to convey.

This brings us to the phrase, which stands at the head of the third chapter, *the Evangelical Christ*. The epithet 'evangelical' means 'connected with the Gospel.' So, when we speak of 'the evangelical Christ,' we mean the Christ of the Gospel, the Christ who is presented in the message of Redemption. Now this must be carefully distinguished from another phrase which has gained currency in recent theological

discussion. We often hear nowadays of the 'Jesus of the Gospels' who is contrasted with the 'Christ of experience.' By the former is meant the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, who can be discerned in the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The latter is that spiritual Personality who meets us in the Fourth Gospel and in the epistles of the New Testament, who is the subject of the theology of the Christian Church, and whose presence is recognised in the religious experience of believers. I should not deny that the distinction was real, or at any rate convenient. But I should claim that there was a vital link between the two, and that that link was what I have called 'the Evangelical Christ.' The weakness of Modernism is that it fails to perceive the bridge that connects them. How was the Synoptic or Markan Jesus able to suggest the impression which the Fourth Gospel presents? What welds them into a living unity is the Cross, which, as I believe, can be shown to be the goal of the 'Jesus of the Gospels' and the starting-point of the 'Christ of experience.' The Death of Christ is an event in Time, which has its significance in Eternity. It is the historical sacrament of an abiding reality.

The object of the third chapter is to show Jesus' conception of His own work. In Him God was about to bring in His sinless kingdom, of which His own redemptive Death was the indispensable condition. Two considerations must be borne in mind if its drift is to be understood. The first is the relation of Christ to the Old Testament. Now I can quite imagine that some of my readers will be inclined to put the book aside so soon as they discover that it concerns itself with the thoughts and expectations of the ancient prophets. 'What we want,' they will say, 'is to read Christ in the light of the Twentieth Century. Why do you labour to prove to us that He fulfils the Hebrew prophecies? Those are old-world notions.' But as a matter of fact I am not attempting any such task. You cannot hope to understand Jesus, any more than you can appreciate Shakespeare, unless you look at Him against the background of His own times. You want to know how He conceived His mission, how He interpreted His task, what He thought of Himself. Now you can only do this by a study of His inner life, as it is revealed in word and action. These are naturally and inevitably expressed in the language and forms which belong

to His race and the environment of His career. Our Lord was a Jew of Palestine, coming into the world at a definite moment in history, and with the background of His own national story. He accomplishes a work of eternal and universal significance under particular conditions of Time and Place. We are only, therefore, going to arrive at His own meaning by knowing the import of the terms He used. We must look at Him in relation to the Old Testament, which is the familiar coin of His own self-expression. We need also to know something of the Apocalyptic Literature of the later Jews; writings, that is, which correspond in general type to our Christian Book of the Revelation, and of which the canonical Book of Daniel is the first and most famous instance. These writings gave Him many of the symbols under which He was able to express His own conception of the Destiny He was appointed to fulfil. But we must never forget that it is not what the Jewish Apocalypses say, not what the Hebrew Prophets wrote, but what Christ has Himself made of the ideas they express, which is important for our purpose.

This, then, is the first consideration that we must keep before us, the Old Testament and other

Hebrew writings. What this book endeavours to maintain is that Jesus regarded Himself as the Divine Representative, through whose suffering and death would come the universal kingdom of God. Whether He entertained this idea from the outset of His ministry, or was aided by the progress of events in the development of this transcendental scheme, is not primarily important. My own opinion is that the whole scheme was essentially present at least from the moment of His Baptism. But our view of the Person of Christ must never be based upon what He appeared at any given moment, but upon what all the facts of His manifestation taken together show Him to be. Now to students of Hebrew prophecy it is a commonplace that it created the expectation of a Messiah, who was to visit and redeem His people, and that the portrait of this Personality contained elements which apocalyptic thought had so developed that a Prince of the House of David reigning in righteousness became the transcendental King of a new heaven and earth. It can be shown that Jesus of Nazareth deliberately adopted these ideas as expressing His own mission.

When we turn from this side of the picture to

the suffering of death, we cannot speak quite so positively. What is undisputed is that, with remarkable unanimity, the disciples at once applied the language of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to their now risen Master. He was that Suffering Servant of Jehovah, of whom the prophet spoke, and who had seen of the travail of his soul. My own view is that this identification had been anticipated by Jesus Himself. Others, however, in the absence of direct citation, would hesitate to connect the thought of Jesus with this prophecy. Yet it would still be true that He foresaw the path of suffering. Whether this included a prevision of His Death is another matter, which I should not wish to determine. But, be this as it may, I am convinced that Messianic Kingship achieved through death was the programme which Jesus adopted for Himself; and that the interpretation of the famous portrait in the later part of Isaiah, adopted by the primitive Christians immediately upon its glorious achievement, was a natural and inevitable consequence.

The other point, which must be borne in mind when we are considering the Evangelical Christ, is the connection between death and sin. Here

at once we must expect resistance from the modern mind. Sin, if it have any substantial reality at all, is an activity of will. It has no existence for man until his moral personality is in action. But death is a phenomenon connected with the appearance, development, decay, and dissolution of animal forms. It is a stage in the manifestation of life. How, then, can it be regarded as a punishment, or even as a consequence of sin? That is the spirit in which many readers of to-day will approach the argument of page 80. They will say, 'Here is a writer still living in the circle of thought of at least a century ago. He is impervious to the lessons of modern science. He can, therefore, have nothing to teach us. If the Christian Faith cannot be stated apart from this antiquated conception, we shall have to give it up.' Let me, then, say at once that I am quite prepared to accept this point of view. Nothing in my argument is intended for a moment to run counter to the plain and obvious fact that physical death is as natural a phenomenon as physical birth. You cannot have an organism that does not ultimately dissolve so that its elements may be recombined in other forms of life. Well and good.

But are you perfectly sure that, when you have said this, you have disposed of an idea which is so persistent in Christian thinking as to be practically inseparable from Christian Faith ?

Remember, in the first place, that it is the Death of Christ round which the whole of our religion centres. Remember also that the very form in which the Gospel is presented is this : ' Christ died for our sins.' It would certainly seem as though death were the great fact of human experience, which had in some way to be dealt with and transfigured before communion with God could be achieved. It would seem as though in some way death had to be recognised as an obstacle which blocked the pathway leading to Eternal Life. This is quite in accordance with the facts of Comparative Religion. They bear testimony to the relation which has been recognised again and again by the human spirit as connecting death with the removal of hindrances to fellowship with the Divine. And it ought not to require very unusual insight to perceive that when New Testament writers speak of death as ' the wages of sin,' or of those ' who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,' or of the risen Christ as having ' the keys of

death,' they are using language to which they hope for a response in the experience of those for whom they write.

Now, whatever may be said of the attitude of individuals, ancient or modern, it is impossible to view the experience of the race as a whole without recognising that Death has always been 'the valley of the shadow.' For human beings the fear of death has become part of its moral experience. The love of life, the anticipation of judgment, the dread of the unknown, the pangs which often precede the hour of dissolution, the severance of friends, its premature approach, the uncertainties of an unknown future—all have had their share in exalting this natural fact into the king of terrors. The normal man may acquiesce in a fate which is inevitable. But welcome it, he cannot. And there can be no doubt that St. Paul expresses a moral truth when he says : 'The sting of death is sin.' It is equally true that the soul, which has escaped from the bondage of sin through faith in Jesus, experiences, in proportion to the strength of its assurance, a sense of victory over death. It is really not to the point to say that St. Paul's view of the relation between sin and death was dictated by

his Semitic belief that physical death was introduced into the world by the Fall. He certainly recognised that the Death of Jesus had not abolished physical death for believers, for his epistles to the Corinthians and Romans were all written in view of the fact, with which he had already dealt in 1 Thessalonians, that some Christians had already 'fallen asleep.' And he says that some transcendental 'change' would be necessary in the case of those that should be 'alive and remain' at the Second Coming. The whole point of the Christian position was, and is, that for the believer death is no longer death but sleep. The fact with which Christ deals is neither Death in a purely spiritual sense nor yet Death as a merely physical phenomenon, but that complex moral experience, which has, as a matter of fact, held men in bondage. It is an experience of the Son of Man. 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me.'

The fourth chapter, which is occupied with the substance of the apostolic Gospel, ought not to present great difficulty to those who have been able to follow what has already been said concerning the meaning of the Evangelical Christ. But there is one part of the

subject about which it would be well to say a preliminary word. There is no doubt that the primitive community of Christians looked forward to a speedy return of the Lord in glory. Now there are many modern scholars, reviewing the Gospel records in the light of apocalyptic study, who maintain that, in doing so, they were only following the lead of Jesus Himself. To me this seems by no means clear. That He expected a triumphant revelation of the kingdom, to which the Cross was the prelude, is certain. But it seems to be equally certain that He checked the eager desire of His followers to be made acquainted with the times and seasons. Of that day and hour, He told them, not even the Son Himself was acquainted. What they needed, He reminds them, was not accurate information concerning the future, but moral power to fulfil their part in preparation for the kingdom. Jesus Christ never looked forward to the harvest of the years otherwise than with the eye of the prophet. It was spiritual insight rather than universal knowledge that assured Him of His own Second Coming. It was a moral not a philosophic certainty. His conviction arose out of His implicit trust in the eternal purpose of the Father. His atti-

tude had been expressed long before by the prophet Habakkuk. 'The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come.'¹

This moral element in Christ's expectation is one of its most remarkable features, and it is reflected in the teaching and conduct of the apostles. Their call is always to action. They recognise that its approach is not independent of the preparation made for it. St. Peter is represented in the Acts as urging repentance on his hearers as a factor in the development of God's purpose—'that so He may send the Christ.' And this ought to give us pause before we decide that if, as some believe, Jesus expected an immediate Advent, He was necessarily mistaken. The Judge might be standing before the door, and yet His entrance be hindered by the unreadiness of the Church.

But the important point to bear in mind is this. The Gospel of Redemption is incomplete if it fail to include the hope of Christ's Second Coming. It is here that, whether they know it or not, the apocalyptic scholars of the present day are conferring an immense service upon the

¹ See also p. 128, note.

interpretation of the New Testament. Our Saviour never meant us to conceive Salvation only in relation to what evangelicals have called His 'Finished Work.' Redemption is a fact that runs through history. 'The just shall live by his faith' that the Reign of the Redeemer moves towards its visible consummation.

The three chapters which follow are an attempt to express the characteristic experience of the man who realises that he has in his own personal life become the subject of God's redeeming action in Christ. There is no such thing as a Christianity of the once-born. The great principle enunciated in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel is universally true. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom.' Faith in the Christian sense of the word has never meant the conviction that certain propositions are true. We do not begin by believing that Jesus is the world's Redeemer in order that we may go on to find that He is our own Redeemer. From the conversion of St. Paul right onward to the very latest instance of the revelation of God in Christ to a human soul, the order of faith has been precisely the reverse. It is in proportion as we experience Christ as the rock on which our

own life rests that we acknowledge His universal sovereignty.

Justification is the term which St. Paul uses to express the reconstitution of the personal life in its right relation to a personal God. The etymology of the word is only significant as it prevents us from getting into a wrong train of ideas. St. Paul as a Jew was, of course, a son of the Hebrew Law. It was, therefore, not unnatural that a word, which involves the notion of acquittal, should have suggested itself to his mind as expressive of the new relations which had been established between God and his own soul through Jesus Christ. But the forensic or judicial associations of the word, which are only secondary even as the apostle himself used it, are permanently important only as showing that it is a personal act of God, whereby He receives us for His sons, and not a process of moral rehabilitation, whereby we are 'made righteous,' which is the fundamental Christian experience.

In reading what I have written about Substitution, it ought not to be supposed that I am contending for a word which has been proved to be liable to all kinds of gross misunderstanding.

Abandon the word, if you like, but do not throw away the thing. Christians have clung to the term, because it conveys a meaning, which all other interpretations of the offering of Christ, 'for us men, and for our salvation,' have failed to reach. The Atonement is God's work and, therefore, not ours. Redemption is God in action, and, therefore, our attitude towards it must be one of simple, trustful, thankful dependence.

'Yea, Thou wilt answer for me, gracious Lord ;
Thine all the merits, mine the great reward ;
Thine the sharp thorn, and mine the golden crown ;
Mine the life won, and Thine the Life laid down.'

It is time enough to consider all the other aspects of the Saviour's work, and they are many, when we have said that.

It only remains to call attention to the final chapter, on 'Salvation in the Church,' as the climax of the book. May I beg the reader, if he finds himself held up for the moment by some rather difficult argument, to turn over the pages till he gets to this chapter ? At least read that. For there you will find the practical result of the whole. This series is intended, in the first instance, for churchmen. We want, if we can,

to exhibit that glorious heritage of corporate Christianity, which reaches us, as we believe, through the Church of our baptism, as a divine institution worthy of a loyalty which is both passionate and reasonable. The kingdom of God has not yet in the final sense come with power. But amid the turmoil of good and evil the eye of faith can discern its presence, veiled though it may be under the patient activities, the familiar ministries, and the homely sacraments of the Church Militant. 'Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus.'

II

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ?

IF a missionary to-day wishes to reassure those who have been converted from heathenism to Christianity of the truth of the religion which they profess, he will appeal not to the consistency of their theory of life as compared with the contradictions and confusions of paganism, but to the change which they have consciously experienced. 'You remember what you once were,' he will say to them, 'when you were still in ignorance of Christ, when you were still in the environment of the old heathen society. You remember what you were, and you know what you have become since you were initiated by baptism into the fellowship of Jesus.' This and nothing else has been the appeal of the preacher of the Gospel right onward from the days of the apostles. He is not ashamed of his message, because he knows from the experience not only of his own life but of his evangelistic work that

Christ is a dynamic, the very power of God. Every new field of labour, in proportion as it helps us to distinguish between the message and the conditions of life and thought under which it was first apprehended, increases the confidence with which the one living truth is presented anew. It is addressed to men as men, finding an entry into hearts and minds which have been prepared for its quickening influence by an education as various as the histories, the circumstances, the mental and moral equipments of the nations of the earth.

The forms of the Bible, of the New no less than of the Old Testament, are so predominantly Hebrew, that the thoughts and ideas which can be definitely traced to sources external to the people of Abraham are very few in number. Yet from the first age of the Christian Church men did not require a long apprenticeship to Jewish modes of expression before they could think themselves into an attitude of mind favourable to the recognition of Jesus as the Redeemer. On the contrary, the language of the Scriptures becomes immediately intelligible because those to whom it is addressed, no matter how remote from the circle in which it was originally minted, are

in possession of the experience which enables them to recognise its universal significance. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is reported to have made the impressive statement, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' And His apostles at once put this declaration to the proof by announcing an uplifted Christ as the divine response to the need of every human heart. They determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This was the fact which had brought to themselves the interpretation of the need which it satisfied. Its declaration would do the same for others.

The Resurrection had lifted Jesus of Nazareth above all the categories under which even the most religious of their Hebrew compatriots had conceived of a deliverer. In so far as those, whose vision of the world had been transformed by it, were obliged to use the Hebrew ideals of the Messiah, the Anointed Representative of a Redeeming God, those ideals were transformed by the new experience, which henceforth gave a fresh, a universal content to the old conception. Salvation was 'of the Jews.' They recognised a true sequence, a genuine

historical setting for the great thing which was come to pass. But it at once appeared to them as a creative act, a new thing which God had done, a fact of universal significance that could be at once transferred from its immediate surroundings into all conceivable situations in which there were human hearts seeking rest, human needs craving an eternal satisfaction.

That was the charter of missionary enterprise, the urgent motive of apostolic travel. The word of the Cross must be spoken under every sky. Its image must be set up in the square of every city, in the street of every village. It would create its own environment of laden souls hastening to lay their burden at its gracious foot. This would never have been the case if the religion of Jesus had been conceived by its first preachers as nothing more than the flower of Judaism. They proclaimed Jesus and the Resurrection because here was a new fact. It could not have sprung into existence along the line of any other development than that in the course of which it came. It had its own attachment with the past, yet was capable of detachment, because its intrinsic significance and not its relations with history invested it

with supreme and universal importance for every man.

The subject of the Christian witness has never been a doctrine but always a fact. It is facts which create experience, and it is experience which is the primary evidence of the truth of Christianity. We must not go off on a side track. People speak of the Teaching of Jesus as though the essential problem were the relation which this bears to the doctrines of Judaism on the one hand and the doctrines of the Christian Church on the other. It is no doubt one of the difficult tasks of theology to relate the ecclesiastical doctrine which finds expression in the creeds with a large proportion of the teaching of the New Testament.

You will understand what I mean if I ask you to take a page of one of St. Paul's epistles and compare it with a page of the Gospel according to St. John. St. John starts with the revelation of the Word made flesh. From this point it is not difficult to trace the development of Christian thought till we reach the Nicene Creed. But the characteristic ideas of St. Paul are quite different. He lays stress upon salvation rather than revelation. And we do not find men thinking again in

terms of what he calls Justification by Faith till we reach the age of the Reformation. How are we to link up St. Paul with the theology of the first four centuries ? This is a difficulty which is exercising the minds of historical theologians. But the problem is not really insoluble. Christology, or the doctrine of the Person of Christ, is present in St. Paul no less than in St. John. The Fourth Gospel is no more indifferent to Redemption than the Epistle to the Romans. And we may confidently expect that the future historian of dogma will succeed where even Harnack has failed, and the whole structure of Christian doctrine be seen as a development of primitive apostolic teaching.

But the point of such a confidence is surely this. We are here dealing with an evolution of interpretation. Between St. Paul and St. Athanasius, between St. Athanasius and Aquinas, between Aquinas and Martin Luther, no new factor is introduced. It is all a matter of interpreting facts already present, a subject-matter already given. But when we go back to Jesus Himself we are on ground altogether different. In attempting to trace points of connection between the Teaching of Jesus and

the doctrine of a Paul or a John, we are trying to apply a common measure to what is in reality not commensurable. It is with the Cross of Christ, not with the Teaching of Jesus, that Christians are primarily concerned. No apostle, no missionary has ever yet bidden his hearers conform their view of God, their conception of the world, their ideals of morality to the views, conceptions, and ideals of Jesus. Such exhortations are rightly addressed to those who are already Christians. They may even be appropriate in bidding an audience as yet unconverted to consider how great this Man was. But the evangelist is directly engaged in the proclamation of good news. He pleads with men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to the salvation of the soul. He is not even occupied with Jesus as the Founder of a new and incomparable religion. He does not care whether the subject of his address falls under the category of religion or not. Jesus Christ and Him Crucified is as much a fact of and for experience as the air we breathe, the sights we see, the sounds we hear. This fact, once apprehended, transfigures our whole conception of reality more radically than the receiving of sight by one born blind. We

are lifted as by a resurrection into a new order, we are born into a new life. Of the two figures perhaps that of resurrection is the better analogy, because it recognises a true continuity between old and new. The former things have passed away, yet they are not lost. The lower is transcended by the higher order of being. But, risen or born again, it is a new life in a new world.

A close study of the epistles of St. Paul should help us to grasp this fundamental fact. The Christian life of the great apostle was built upon the Gospel of Christ Crucified. This he preached with an almost feverish anxiety to add no speculation of his own keen intelligence to the message as it was delivered to himself. We shall not encumber ourselves with unnecessary theories about his supposed Graeco-Roman education and his sympathies with Gentile thought as the motive which led him to detach, and possibly to transform in the process of detachment, the original Hebrew Gospel of the Messiah. Of course he sought means of entrance, as every wide-minded and large-hearted Christian missionary must, to the consciences of all men. He would talk to Gentiles about the Isthmian Games. He would

be as ready to quote Aratus as the modern preacher to draw upon Robert Browning or Omar Khayyám. He would notice altars to unknown gods, and make what he could out of Greek mysteries or heathen sacrifices. Nor need we be concerned to doubt that as the Gospel found a home for itself among new surroundings, it would begin to interpret itself in Gentile forms of thought. But St. Paul, as he himself assures us, was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and it is becoming increasingly evident that his forms of thought, and to some extent his very language, owe next to nothing to Greek and Roman sources. No, the one fact that accounts, and accounts completely, for the gulf that divides him from Judaism and 'the Teaching of Jesus,' is his own vivid apprehension of the Person of Christ, realised and expressed in His Death and Resurrection as in itself 'the power of God and the wisdom of God.' That and nothing else is the text of the Epistle to the Romans. 'I am not ashamed,' he says, 'of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God . . . to every one that believeth.' That is the fact, the new fact, that made St. Paul, as it has made every subsequent missionary, an apostle to the nations. Why

cannot we trust their own testimony, their own account of the motives by which they have been possessed ? He does not profess for a moment to advance the teaching of Jesus about God and man, Jesus' faith in God and His love to man, as a revelation of the true relations in which each human being ought to stand towards God and his neighbour, and may indeed actually stand if he will but receive the teaching and exercise the faith. What he does speak of is the change that has passed upon his own life in virtue of a voluntary activity on the part of God Himself, which has reached him through Jesus Christ. There came a moment in his career when it pleased God to manifest His Son in him, when by the free action of His own spontaneous favour He called him, adopted him into the circle of those who were covered by His redeeming purpose, carried him up, so to speak, into that fellowship of the Spirit which was brought to earth when 'in the fulness of the time,' at a definite point in the history of the world, 'God sent forth His Son.' And when in the Epistle to the Ephesians he appeals to the experience of the Christians, once darkness but now light in the Lord, and contrasts the things of which now they are ashamed with

the love, joy, peace of their discipleship, it is the blood of the Cross, the concrete and actual work of Jesus accomplished on the stage of history, which separates the present from the past.

To some, who read this book, these phrases will seem hackneyed. It will be our task to try to explain them. Meantime it is sufficient to emphasise the fact that those right relations with the universal order, in which blessedness consists, are in the view of Christians achieved by the work of Christ, which enlarges the field of human experience, creating a new world into which they have been introduced, a new order of which they have become a part. Thus Christian experience is directly an experience of these new conditions, indirectly an experience of the event, the fact upon which these conditions have been established. The believer bears testimony to a Christ that has died, yea, rather that has risen again.

This is historical Christianity. To this the Church bears witness. The purpose of the appeal to the New Testament is not in the first instance to reach the Jesus of history,¹ but to confirm or correct, as the case may be, the living voice of the Church by comparison with the apostolic

¹ See p. 10 for the meaning of the term.

message. This message, or Gospel, links the Christ of experience,¹ who is daily bearing witness to Himself in the lives of believers, to the historical Jesus, whose relation to this Christ is the ultimate problem of the critics. Again, 'the Christ of the creeds' is the expression given by Christian thought to what it sees to be involved in the attitude of the worshipping community towards the Redeemer. The Cross and Resurrection are the bridge by which Jesus passes from the narrow stage of His earthly ministry to the exalted Throne, from which He saves and judges. It is the whole of this manifestation that gives us the Personality which the Church calls 'very God of very God.' This is the Christ, the beams of whose Deity are restrained in the Prophet of Nazareth, who as Priest reconciles mankind on Calvary, and who as King now reigns to redeem His people. Two mistakes must be avoided. One is the mistake of forestalling historical criticism by predicating of Jesus before His resurrection all that we rightly ascribe to Him after His exaltation. The other is of attempting to account for the great fact of the Christian Church, and the life which is char-

¹ See p. 10 for the meaning of the term.

acteristic of it, on any theory which purports to go behind the apostolic Gospel. We must be careful to have the whole Christ before us before we enter on our theology, but not allow our theology to prejudice or distort any of the facts. And there is yet a third possibility of error, arising out of the conviction that, if we set aside the results of a critical study of the Gospels as uncertain, the creed of Christendom justifies itself in its effects. The device of the Modernist is to divorce the dogmas from their basis in history, leaving them, as it were, suspended in the air and unrelated to the facts underlying the Gospels. The true connecting link is the Cross, which is alike the goal of the historical Jesus and the starting-point of the redeeming Christ. Through Calvary Jesus of Nazareth becomes the Christ of experience, and experience issues in doctrine. The evangelist is neither a lecturer on Christian evidences, nor an instructor in dogmatic formulas. He is the bearer of a Gospel which saves. He puts men into touch with Christ, so that He, in whom he has himself believed, may influence directly the souls of others, and reproduce His work in them. What he has confidence in is the power of Christ to save,

to awaken a response in those to whom He is presented. Men gain the assurance that in Christ God comes to them. I must point out once again that this Christ is not to be distinguished from the Jesus who, according to the apostolic witness, dies and rises again. St. Paul accepted without question his experience on the road to Damascus as establishing the fact that He who had been crucified, and whom the Christian community declared to have risen again, was exalted as Prince and Saviour. The divine act of conversion, which the disciple recognises as the result of his surrender to Jesus, becomes for him the testimony to the Resurrection.

People preach a gospel because they have good grounds, nay, what to them is sure and certain warrant, for believing it to be true, not because they have irrefragable evidence for establishing it historically. Many things have actually happened, which are not and never will be part of history. And even if the apostolic witness concerning Christ were less capable of historic proof than it actually is, there would still be ample ground for regarding it as true in fact. But we are under no necessity of accepting as dogmatically useful what is historically untrue,

or of doing violence to our historical honesty in affirming the entire accuracy of the Gospels, or of accommodating our faith to the exigencies of historical criticism. We have a self-evidencing Gospel, and what we require is to trust it.

To avoid any misapprehension of my own position I had perhaps better say that I accept in a simple and straightforward way what are usually called the historical clauses of the Apostles' Creed. Whether all or any of them are capable of exact proof or complete historical attestation is another matter. The mind of a man trained in the modern scientific method of literary criticism cannot honestly foreclose the results of inquiry into the origin and value of documentary evidence, even though it admits that inveterate prejudice may stultify conclusions in more directions than one. Historical criticism is amenable to its own laws, and there can be no confidence in results where, apart from the operation of those laws, the issue is not always treated as open. But what is of primary importance is not the precise value of any or all of the narratives included in the Gospels, which are necessarily far less certain than the Fact which underlies them, but the preservation of that

standard presentation of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, out of which the Christian's fellowship with God invariably springs. Unless this be true, Christianity loses its distinguishing mark and becomes merged in the stream of general religion. It has no substantial reality unless that in which it takes its beginning is real also. The Church and the Gospel are correlative. They stand and fall together. One cannot have a secure lodgment upon the earth without the other. And this is the Gospel, this message of Christ coming into the world, dying upon the Cross, and rising again. The Christian feels it as the grip of Eternity upon his life. Christ and His Cross become my point of contact with the living God. It may well be that a mind, which has no moral sympathy with Redemption, should suspend judgment on the facts of the Gospel.

What we have to try to see clearly is the distinction between acknowledging access to God through Jesus crucified and risen, as the essential characteristic of Christianity, and the requirement of certain preliminary decisions in matters of literary and historical criticism. History is not mathematics. Documentary evidence can never exclude the possibility that what is believed to

have happened did not in fact occur. I may hold the margin of doubt to be so narrow as to be in fact negligible, while another differently constituted may be equally convinced that the evidence of the document in question is insufficient. In any case what are apparently the most assured results must in the nature of the case be always subject to revision. It is always conceivable that a position which has seemed to be put beyond all doubt for one age may become unsettled in the next, either through the use of more subtle methods of criticism or the discovery of new material for judgment. Or philosophical conceptions may so change that we may perceive, or think we perceive, that what was supposed to have happened in one way really happened in another. The fact is there all the time, but we look at it with different eyes. Everything, therefore, as it seems to me, is to be gained by recognising that what the New Testament contains is a gospel and not a lecture on evidences. The apostles were concerned with making all men see what is 'the fellowship of the mystery' which was made known in Christ. They trusted to the inherent truth of their message to find its way to conscience and heart, assured, as they were, that

no man cometh to the Father save through Him whom it was their mission to declare. They appealed to Faith.

The objective of all such preaching is conversion. To evangelise is not to gain adherents to a teaching, but to spread a knowledge which transforms the life. That there are phenomena in religious and moral experience, which present features akin to those which accompany what Christians know as conversion, does not in any way invalidate the unique character of that experience. The revelation to which the human personality actively responds is as much part of conversion as the change itself. In other words, conversion is not the awakening of the soul in response to any stimulus whatsoever, but only to the presence of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. 'One thing I know' is the testimony of the man who has found himself in being found of God. 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' I know that Jesus died and rose again, not because I have unimpeachable documentary evidence that these events actually occurred in the history of the world, but because through these facts I have verily and indeed attained to God.

If we were only more evangelical in our approach to Christ, we should see that the bugbears of higher criticism, the credibility of miracles, and all the other difficulties, which loom so large in the modern mind, have no ultimate validity. The Christian has got inside the fellowship of the mystery before he is called upon to take into account the problems which these scientific discussions raise. What those who were ministers and eye-witnesses of the Word recognised, long before they were able to express their conviction in terms of intellectual apprehension, was that God was in Christ. Communion with the Father through the Son was to them a substantial reality. He was risen from the dead because they lived in Him. Their preaching thus became 'the Word of the Cross.' The question that determined their missionary labours was simply this: 'How shall they hear without a preacher?' For the rest it was for the Spirit of God Himself to use the proclamation as a sacramental channel through which to save believers. And no one who has any knowledge of the actual conditions under which the Gospel is spread to-day, whether in slums or universities, in nominally Christian countries or in

heathen lands, can doubt that this demonstration of the Spirit, the power which transforms the personality by lifting it up into a new order of being, is still the only instrument by which conviction is wrought. To talk of the Resurrection of Jesus as illusion to the man who can say that the life which he now lives he lives in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself up for him, is like asking him not to draw the inference of his own birth from the fact that he is alive.

If it be urged that this is to make an inward experience, which may itself be an illusion, a test of the reality of alleged occurrences, which have no adequate support in historical testimony, the answer is twofold. First, the experience, of which we speak, is the collective experience of Christians. Secondly, the fact of the Resurrection is not the same thing as any account that may be given of it. Put aside entirely the consideration that there are more difficulties in denying the historical accuracy of the New Testament than in accepting it in the main as a true picture of what happened in regard to Jesus of Nazareth. What we say is not that we must allow our critical faculty to be warped by a

personal prepossession, but that the testimony of every converted man, of every soul, that is, to which the Gospel has proved itself to possess the power which is claimed for it, must necessarily be that Jesus did die and rise again. That is the fact which lies behind the fabric of Christian life and character, which otherwise is the most inexplicable product of history. How far the primitive disciples have been able to represent that fact in the documents, in which they reveal the process by which they attained to faith, is a matter which we may well be content to leave to a just and reverent criticism. How far the conception of miracle is one with which we rightly approach the study of the New Testament is a question, the answer to which will depend very largely on the intellectual climate in which it falls to be discussed. The Gospel is not independent of fact—quite the contrary—but our assurance of the fact is not bound up with the particular value which we may be able to assign to the narratives in which it reaches us, or the forms of statement in which it has been expressed.

Unless we feel able to say this, we may find ourselves placing needless obstacles in the way of those to whom God wills to reveal the truth

as it is in Jesus. There are quite enough obstacles in the self-will, the obstinacy, and pride of the human heart, which are always refusing to capitulate to the grace and mercy of a humble, loving God, to make it peculiarly sad that ears should be deaf to the quickening message because men imagine that some compromise with intellectual sincerity must first be made. Nothing of the kind is in fact demanded. Christ has always captured the soul, and won the allegiance of the true disciple by the inherent power and influence of His appeal, before the need for apologetic arises. Like the blowing of the wind or the growth of the bones in the womb, the faith, which responds to the Gospel, has sprung into being before the man is aware. The most sudden of conversions is but the swift recognition of its presence. The eye of the mind has seen Christ at the right hand of God. Henceforth there can be no question of rejection on any ground of external evidence, but only one of adjustment.

It is when the essential relation of the New Birth to the Christian Revelation is not perceived that evidences acquire an abnormal importance. Bishop Butler made it perfectly clear that religion, being a practical matter, was concerned

with probabilities and not with demonstrated certainties. But what real ground is there for action on the balance, let us say, of six to five that there is a God? That is alleged to have been the philosophy on which Cecil Rhodes founded his imperial policy. But had it been ten to one, would this have been sufficient? Butler would have freely allowed that what men really act upon is not probability but conviction. The truth is that a Wesley, proclaiming a Gospel of full and immediate salvation, and justifying once again the foolishness of preaching by a rich harvest of souls, must supplement the reasoning of Butler by the witness of regenerate lives before Christian apologetic can appear in its true relation to Christian certainty.

There are other intellectual barriers besides those of historical criticism and philosophy which block the way to the entrance of the Gospel. Foremost among these are the difficulties which many people feel in the matter of Christian doctrines. Now, while there is incipient doctrine in the bare presentation of the evangelical facts, inasmuch as this necessarily involves a measure of interpretation, it must never be forgotten that all developed theology is the

outcome of our apprehension of Christ, not its presupposition. The Coming of Christ, of course, means nothing unless with the Nicene Creed we can add 'for us men and for our salvation.' The Death of Jesus has no bearing upon our lives, unless with St. Paul we can say that He died 'for our sins.' His Resurrection is an unrelated incident in the world's story unless with St. Peter we can declare: 'Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.' Moreover, the terms in which the Work of Christ is expressed imply some previous experience, some development of theology; and inasmuch as 'salvation is of the Jews,' it is not to be expected that the Gospel should have been written, as it were, on a blank sheet of paper, and should not have used the religious ideas already current among the Hebrews in order to define its relation to the rest of life, and the nature of its response to the needs of the human race.

But while this is undeniably true, we are yet confronted with the great missionary fact that from the first Christ has been set forth as crucified among peoples and races of infinite variety, without any preparation for His approach other than that which was given in the ordinary experience

of each nation and each individual. The very meaning of St. Paul's great argument in the Epistle to the Galatians is that Jesus can be apprehended and understood by those who have not travelled along the same road as those who were His first disciples. He makes a direct appeal to the faith of every man. We do not need to wait until men have admitted the reality of sin, or the depravity of human nature, or the need of atonement, before disclosing to them the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour. The secret of such a movement as that of the Salvation Army surely lies in the vivid realisation of the power of Christ, if He is uplifted among the people of all nations, no matter what their antecedents may be, to make precisely the same impression, to win exactly the same triumph over surrendered lives. There is a natural affinity between the human heart and the divine message. Men learn to recognise their need in the means by which it is satisfied. The higher man of the modern world, who, as we are told, is not worrying about his sins, finds the criticism of his own standards of righteousness in the obedience, the suffering, and the love of Jesus. The Hindu, whose philosophy does not readily

allow him to feel the problem of guilt, has sufficient cause for dissatisfaction with his own search for fellowship with the divine when he meditates upon that communion with the Father which is manifested in Jesus Crucified. This great sight is calculated of itself to arouse conscience. Repentance, acknowledgment of guilt, faith, these, together with newness of life and conformity to the image of the Son, are all part of the content of the essential Christian experience rather than its preliminary conditions. Reconciliation is the word by which the Christian, drawn by the holy love manifested in Christ, learns to express what has been accomplished for him by the intervention of God Himself. That intervention reaches its climax in the Death of Jesus. That is the Rubicon which the Mediator of this great change in the lives of believers had to cross before He became the author of eternal Salvation. And St. Paul is thus stating a fact of every Christian's experience, when, addressing the Ephesian believers, he describes the transition through which they have all passed in the words, 'Ye that were once far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.' The words may have an infinitely deeper and fuller meaning, as indeed they

have, but they at least mean this. His precious blood is the cost at which Christ has become able to confer upon men that inestimable benefit of peace which they experience as believers in Him.

‘One is amazed at this time of day,’ says the author of the authoritative *Life of General Booth*, ‘to find intelligent men writing as though there were some mysticism, or something quite beyond ordinary understanding, in this theory of conversion.’ This is a comment on the account which he has just given, largely by way of citation from the General’s own words, of the turning to God of this remarkable, and in some respects typical, believer. Many students would no doubt describe William Booth as a prince of mystics, and there are expressions of his own, such for instance as the ‘inward light,’ which would immediately be claimed as justifying the classification. But it is obvious that such a phrase could only be used by an evangelical Christian, as St. John speaks of ‘the light that lighteth every man,’ or as Butler calls conscience ‘the candle of the Lord within us,’ or as the Epistle to the Romans declares that the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made. Those who are deaf to the voice of

conscience, or blind to the sacramental character of the natural world, are 'without excuse,' because they reject a universal message. With such mysticism as this, if indeed the employment of the term be correct, no Christian can have any quarrel. Only he will call it faith which 'looks up' to the 'Lamb of Calvary,' and discerns God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But mysticism, as it has hitherto been accepted, has usually been held to involve what the writer above quoted calls 'something quite beyond ordinary understanding.' It has been characteristic of an aristocracy of religion rather than of that common folk to whom the Gospel is preached. Like the message of Nature or the witness of conscience Christianity is a universal, public, democratic thing. It is not merely a particular form of the doctrine of the union of the human with the divine. It is the good news that Christ, in virtue of what through the facts of His earthly sojourn He has become, is the one mediator between God and man. It is the experience of a life lived upon the assurance that through Him we all have our access in one body to the Father. It is the power of Pentecost issuing from the Finished Work of Calvary.

III

THE MEANING OF THE EVANGELICAL CHRIST

BUT this is not all. We cannot be content to think of Christ merely as a power which has reproduced an experience of spiritual peace in successive generations of disciples, and is still capable of so doing. We want to know and understand more precisely what that mystery is, into fellowship with which the Christian believer has been brought, and of which the change which has passed over his own consciousness is a testimony and pledge. What is the Christ who is thus apprehended, or rather who thus apprehends us? What are the facts, a right relation to which constitutes salvation? Redemption cannot be explained by reference to the conditions of the inner life. As the very name implies, it is first of all a change of external relations, which reflects itself in the consciousness of those who have been redeemed. What, then, is this redemption which the nations of

them that are saved find in Him whom they hail as the Saviour ?

Jesus of Nazareth must be interpreted in relation to the times in which He lived, not because He was the product of the conditions into which He was born, but because the forms, under which He was able to propose to Himself a universal purpose, were necessarily those afforded by the nation, the times, and the traditions into the midst of which He came. While 'the gracious words that proceeded out of His lips' have power to wake the imagination and rouse the conscience of succeeding generations no less than of the crowds that gathered round Him in the days of His flesh, the impulse, which has driven men 'back to Christ' as to a teacher, whose mind could be interpreted apart from the task which He fulfilled, belongs to a century which has lost faith in dogma, rather than to the instinctive attitude of the Christian brotherhood. It was Jesus of Nazareth, not as He had once sojourned among His disciples, but as He was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour at God's right hand, who was the subject of the Pentecostal preaching of St. Peter. It was Jesus of Nazareth, not whose memory he

was dishonouring, but whom he was even then persecuting, whose revelation to the stricken Saul wrought his wonderful conversion. St. Paul was not the first who determined not 'to know Christ after the flesh,' that is, as a historical person. It was the common attitude of the primitive, the apostolic, community. This was due not to any indifference, such as would then have been impossible, to the true continuity between the Christ whom they worshipped and the Jesus who had lived and died, but to a clear recognition of the fact that it was the resurrection that made the difference between a being limited by the opportunities of time and place and a universal personality for whom these barriers were removed. He was Jesus of Nazareth. There was a genuine link of living continuity between the Galilean Prophet and the Glorified One. But while we do not forget that the First Epistle of St. Peter declares that Christ has left us an example 'that we should follow in His steps,' and that even St. Paul speaks of himself as an imitator of Christ, it is nevertheless characteristic of the New Testament to lay comparatively little emphasis upon the Life of Jesus, and to concentrate attention rather

upon the Act whereby He gave Himself up for us all and was exalted to the right hand of power.

This is not only in accordance with the testimony of evangelical Christianity in every age, but it is the only attitude which is consistent with such indications as the Gospels afford of the consciousness of Jesus Himself. When the Fourth Gospel ascribes to our Lord the saying, that, if He were lifted up from the earth, He would draw all men unto Himself, this only expresses in words the concentrated purpose which is clearly revealed in the Synoptic tradition. The very last impression of the Son of Man, which would be conveyed to the ordinary reader in St. Mark's Gospel, is that of a teacher expounding his philosophy of life and gradually unfolding his system, till at last he is cut off by the envious hate of an unsympathetic society, a martyr to a vision splendid, for which the mass of his contemporaries was unprepared. His words, for all their eternal significance, are wrung from Him by the passing necessities of the hour. His works of mercy are snatched from Him by those who become the objects of His compassion through the accident of casual association or

the importunity with which they break in upon His privacy. He avoids the people more often than He courts their approach. He goes before, and His disciples follow Him. He declares that He has a baptism to be baptized with, and is straitened till it is accomplished. He moves forward, we could almost say, if reverence allowed, incontinently to His Passion. When at last, in the absence of the otherwise necessary witnesses to the utterance of 'blasphemy,' the High Priest puts point-blank the momentous question, 'Art Thou the Messiah?' He seals His own doom, voluntarily meets His fate, with the straight unequivocal answer, 'Thou hast said.' Jesus has His eye upon the future. Nothing can be clearer than that. His work is to make that future, to create the conditions under which He shall reign as King of the spiritual kingdom, drawing all men to Himself. His problem, His task is to achieve this consummation, when the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, shall sit on the throne of His glory, surrounded by the holy angels, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. In such language, drawn from what were then the familiar ideas of Hebrew apocalypse, our Lord justifies by anticipation that

comparative indifference to His biography, which has from the first been characteristic of those who acknowledge that they owe everything to Him, and which forms a paradoxical contrast to the customary attitude of disciples towards their master. He Himself voluntarily withdraws from the common opportunities of human service which were His in a degree pre-eminent. He would not be called a benefactor. Death becomes an obsession of His spirit, because the unique service, for which He knows Himself to be destined, is one that cannot be accomplished on the plane of this mortal life. It belongs to the sphere which is spiritual and transcendent.

How, then, can this be? Jesus Christ, as we have said, was not the product of His age. In every personality there is something creative and original. It enters upon the evolving process, which we call the world, and within the limits of its opportunity becomes a modifying and moulding force, switching the course of history on to new lines and mingling its own purpose with the general movement. And this we feel to be pre-eminentlly true of the Personality of Jesus. Yet this does not imply that He was not in the strict sense of the word a historical figure,

whose work started, and necessarily started, from the particular point at which He intervened in human affairs. If His activity affects the whole of mankind, it is because its consequences touch every member of the human family, and not because its outward form was anything but relative to the times in which it was accomplished. It is as irrelevant to take the historic Jesus, that is, our Lord as He was manifested between Bethlehem and Calvary, and to set Him down in imagination among the complications of the twentieth century, as it would be to put Adam down at the Bank and to expect him to comport himself like a city clerk. It is not a case of 'if Christ were to come to Chicago.' He does so come day by day, but it is the Christ of the apocalyptic vision, who indeed became dead, who 'once in time was slain,' but who now liveth for evermore.

When Jesus of Nazareth came forward to play His supremely momentous part in the world's history, a great revival of religion was already in full progress in His native land. John was proclaiming his stirring message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' and baptizing in the Jordan those who desired to flee from the

coming wrath and to meet their God. There was nothing in the circumstances of the time to suggest a sudden catastrophe, a swift consummation of the Eternal Purpose. There never is. There never has been. There never will be. The Word is always preached as much out of season as in it. All things continue as they were. The cycles of change go on, and apparently will go on. There is no reason in the nature of things why development should ever cease. But what the prophet and the seer mean by the kingdom of God does not evolve. It comes. The rule of God is spiritual, personal, eternal. His action is essentially intervention even in the case of those less perceptible movements of His will which can be represented as mere evolution. Much more is this seen to be the case in those affairs where personality plays a more obvious and conspicuous part. Nor must we allow imagination to conceive of the future in terms of the past. What has been even the gods, as the Greeks used to put it, cannot change. As we survey it, it is like a chart unrolled. Every event is marked in its due order, each part is seen in its unalterable relation to the whole.

But the future is not like that. The Greeks

would have said it is on the knees of the gods. But it is partly on our own knees ; that is, as self-determining personalities we have our own share, albeit a comparatively narrow share, in tracing out what to-morrow will be on the map of the past. Nor is it different with God Himself. To discern that the kingdom is at hand is not to possess a divine revelation of the day and hour at which in the working out of an inevitable plan the rule of God must be established. Its approach will be announced by sons of God and prophets, whensoever they become vividly aware of that Spirit, which is ever ready to descend as a baptism of fire upon a waiting people. 'The signs of the times' which the inwardly blind cannot read are not the stages of development, which immediately precede the end, but tokens of the Spirit's presence, which are spiritually discerned. Thus the messenger of God always breaks in upon a world which is either apathetic or complacent or despairing but never expectant. Expectancy must be created by the mission of Elijah, by the voice crying in the wilderness.

It was this proclamation of the kingdom with which the air was ringing when Jesus stepped out upon the stage of active work. To understand what

is meant by the kingdom, we must go back upon Hebrew history. We have already summed up the idea shortly in the rule of God. But it was no new and original conception with which our Lord identified Himself, when He undertook to become, not like John the Baptist the herald of the kingdom, but the bearer and bringer in of the new order, the Personality in which it was to be actually established on the earth.

In the Old Testament we find two great centres of Hebrew expectation. On the one hand there is the great vision of the famous prophets of the eighth century before Christ, of whom Isaiah is the chief. On the other hand is the Book of Daniel. Its style and method are already found in the prophetical writings, but it is the first complete example of a branch of Hebrew literature, which includes the Book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Psalms of Solomon, and exercised a decisive influence on the religious mind of our Lord's contemporaries. Its counterpart in the New Testament is the Revelation of St. John the Divine. These apocalyptic writings, as they are called, reveal the peculiar colour which had been imparted to the Hebrew expectation of redemption by the disappearance

of Israel's national existence and the long subjection of the people to the government of the foreigner.

The prophetic hope is expressed in the second, the seventy-second, and the hundred and tenth Psalms. The picture of the future is painted in the eleventh and the thirty-fifth chapters of Isaiah, or in the fourth and fifth chapters of Micah. A kingdom of peace is portrayed of which Solomon's reign was a faint anticipation. Righteousness is its law; a prince of the house of David, invested with prerogatives and attributes all but divine, is its ruler. Israel has become God's people not only in memory and destiny but in the actual realisation of the divine ideal. That such a kingdom was infinitely more than a local and national ideal, in spite of the ardent patriotism out of which it arose, was perceived by the prophets themselves. The great prophet of the Exile, for example, whose work begins with the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, beholds a restored and ransomed Zion, upon which the glory of the Lord has arisen, whose temple is the house of prayer for all the nations, into which the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour. Righteousness is not the exclusive possession of

one nation. A kingdom of which this is the leading characteristic is necessarily universal. The New Jerusalem, whose officers are peace and whose exactors are righteousness, must be, in the words of the eighty-seventh Psalm, 'the joy of the whole earth.' Its king must be the vicegerent of heaven, whose dominion is from sea to sea, and from the river to the world's end. The very terms, therefore, in which the future of God's people is foreshadowed represent a purpose and a consummation as wide as humanity itself.

What, then, are the limitations of this truly magnificent hope? They are the limitations of all ethical ideals which do not transcend the present order of existence. There is not scope enough within the boundaries of mortality to bring them to pass. Not to speak of the multitudes of individual souls, who must pass through nature to eternity without having received the promises, there is, and can be, no such thing as finality in a society which is subject to the law of change. We need a new heavens as well as a new earth for righteousness to indwell. Experience will sooner or later prove too strong for moral enthusiasm, nor is the world capable of evolving a Messiah. If the earth is to be full of the know-

ledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, if it is to gain its heavenly best, then God Himself must 'mingle with the game.' No doubt it will be said that this thought was never absent from the minds of the prophets, that the eternal purpose of God was the very burden of their message, and that the ruler whom their faith anticipated was one whose 'goings forth,' though he was to be manifested in Time, were nevertheless 'from everlasting.' All this is perfectly true, and yet the fact remains that their forecast of the years might nevertheless be understood as representing an evolution of the Spirit, a development of the eternal Plan, a building up of the Spiritual City. But the New Jerusalem must descend out of heaven from God. The Consummation of all things, which is the predestined goal of history, is not the 'far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves,' but a Regeneration, a New Birth, a taking up of the earthen into the celestial kingdom. The Messiah, Redeemer, and King, if he is the Son of Man, is from heaven. He comes in his glory with all the holy angels. His coming involves the resurrection of the dead, and an outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. It is convulsive, catastrophic, transforming. Time

is swallowed up in eternity. The judgment is set and the books are opened. Messiah has become God's deputy in a sense in which no earthly monarch, even if he be the man after God's own heart, can ever represent Him. Old things have passed away and all things become new. This is the vision, expressed in figure and symbol, which replaced the older ideal. Anticipations of it are scattered here and there over the writings of the prophets—in Isaiah, in Zechariah, in Joel. But it is Daniel that gives the impetus to the new apocalyptic, which at the beginning of the Christian era had laid powerful hold upon the Jewish mind.

Which conception was uppermost in the mind of John the Baptist it is scarcely possible to determine. That he appeared in the rôle of a prophet is certain. His life in the desert, his garment of camel's hair, his mode of address, are suggestive of Elijah, however he may have himself disclaimed his identity with that typical prophet. The people took him for a prophet. Our Lord said that he was all that a prophet was and more, that, in fact, to those who could receive it, he was indeed Elijah 'which was for to come.' His message opens with the prelude of the later

Isaiah. He acknowledged himself to be the voice of one crying, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' And, as we watch him dealing with the various classes of men who came out to his baptism, we are made aware of the fact that the old passion for social justice, which burned like a flame in the breast of Amos and Isaiah, is not yet quenched. On the other hand the kingdom, which he announces, is not that of a restored and purified Israel. It is the transcendent kingdom of the apocalyptic writers, a judgment final and irrevocable, a baptism of spiritual fire.

We are now in a position to understand the problem, if we may so call it, which confronted Jesus. How keen is His realisation of that kingdom of social righteousness which the prophets of Israel have made their own! Some of those modern writers, who are pressing upon us, and not without reason, the apocalyptic aspect of the New Testament as essential to the right understanding of Christianity, seem to speak almost disparagingly of the moral side of Christ's teaching, as though in common with the Baptist He regarded morality as part of the earthly discipline of repentance by which men must prepare themselves for the coming of the

Messianic Kingdom, rather than as the eternal law of that kingdom itself. But it is too late in the day to think of Jesus otherwise than as profoundly in sympathy with the prophets. What is the Sermon on the Mount but the publication of a righteousness, exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, as the perfection of the Heavenly Father exceeds it? Because the children of the resurrection neither marry nor are given in marriage, that is not to say that all human relationships, and the morality which conditions them, are transcended in the spiritual world. Is not the denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees conceived in the very spirit of the prophets? Does the Lord not set His seal upon the whole prophetic attitude towards contemporary hypocrisy, when He bids these same Scribes and Pharisees go and learn the meaning of Hosea's words, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice'? Was not He, who was freely addressed as the Son of David and whom the multitude would have gladly made their king, aware of Himself as one charged with the accomplishment of the prophetic hopes?

But it is no less true that Jesus identified Himself with the other conception of the kingdom. Attention is fixing itself more and more on the

evidences, which abound in the Synoptic Gospels, pointing to the Lord's conviction that He was the Messiah, not only of prophetic hope, but also of apocalyptic expectation. If this way of putting it seems to render the whole position of Christ as Redeemer precarious, by making the universal value of His work depend upon the validity for all time of a view of salvation which may after all be relative to Hebrew thought, we may present the case otherwise. What really matters is our Lord's own consciousness of the power to bring to mankind the aid that is supreme and final. To us it does not matter whether He was the Messiah whom the Jews, two thousand years ago, expected, but only whether He is our Saviour. But, when He came into the world, these were the forms in which His contemporaries were thinking, the conceptions which He together with them had inherited. What others made of them fell infinitely short of the meaning which He Himself gave them. And it is this with which we are concerned ; the use which He made of the materials which were at His disposal in order to set forth and so to solve a problem which was universal.

Now there is no doubt that Jesus knew that

the work He had to do on behalf of men was just that which found expression in the Messiah of later Jewish hope. Whether He made any public claim to this Messiahship, or whether it remained until near the end the secret of His own consciousness, determining His action but not demanding recognition, is a more difficult question, which fortunately it is not necessary for us to decide. But it is evident that He had brooded long on the contents of this literature. The Book of Daniel occupies a prominent place in the discourse concerning the End which is recorded with variations in each of the Synoptics. The very form of this discourse is apocalyptic from beginning to end. Jesus sees Himself as the Son of Man seated on the throne of His glory, surrounded by the angels and confronted by all the nations gathered for judgment, whom He separates as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. But this is not the first indication of the mind of Jesus concerning this crucial matter which the narrative affords. When the disciples are sent out, like the king's servants at supper-time, to proclaim the Gospel in the towns and villages of Galilee, it is clear that the Lord has His manifestation in glory prominently before

His mind. 'Verily, I say unto you,' He says, 'ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.' The Feeding of the Five Thousand, which is an episode of such importance that it has acquired a striking prominence in every one of the Gospels, including now the Fourth, has many points of interest and suggestion, and may be viewed from many sides. But whatever else the incident reveals, there can be little doubt that it shows us Jesus anticipating that feast of fellowship in the Messianic Kingdom, of which it was once said by a bystander in presence of the Master Himself, 'Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' The Triumphal Entry, whatever impression it may have made upon the crowd, whatever they may have intended by the branches of palm and scattered garments, whatever they may have themselves understood by 'He that cometh in the Name of the Lord,' cannot be read in its context without showing us how the thought of His Messiahship dominated the mind of Jesus as He came to Jerusalem to die. It is a conscious enacting of the Saviour King, as he is pictured in Zechariah riding into the city on an ass's colt. There is nothing which

strikes us more powerfully in the last week of the Lord's earthly pilgrimage than the marvellous self-possession with which He makes the ancient Scriptures testify of Himself. He is acting with a deliberation and a forethought that would be scarcely explicable if He were the victim of any other force than His own great love for the souls of men. He is the Messiah going straight forward to His uplifting, about to accomplish the one great purpose upon which His whole Personality is concentrated, and to make the kingdom of God come with power.

Once again on the very eve of the Passion, under the very shadow of the Cross itself, He gathers the Twelve about Him for a celebration that bears so remarkable an analogy to the Feeding of the Five Thousand that, even if we did not possess the commentary of the sixth chapter of St. John, it would be difficult not to realise the spiritual affinity which the one occasion bears to the other. And the striking words, 'Till He come,' which St. Paul introduces into his account of the meaning of the Eucharist, viewed in the light of its institution, once again assure us that the rite which Jesus performed at the Last Supper was, if we may so say, a projection into

present experience of that Messianic Feast which the author of Revelation calls 'The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.'

The culminating point is reached when Jesus stands before the Sanhedrin, and the High Priest, having failed to obtain the testimony upon which alone by Jewish Law His condemnation would have been possible, resolves to put the case against his august Prisoner at the hazard of a blunt question. 'Art Thou the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?' is the address heavy with tremendous consequence which Caiaphas utters. Then came the mighty testimony, which stands for all time as the Christ's *Apologia pro vitâ suâ*, and which He sealed, as He had willed to do, with His own Blood: 'I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

No wonder the High Priest rent his clothes. It was either the most awful truth or the direst blasphemy. No middle term is possible. He who had spoken the fateful sentence was neither distraught nor deficient in understanding. He was master alike of Himself and of the situation. The very form of the reply showed at once that there was no misunderstanding of the point of

the question. Jesus of Nazareth, with His life depending on the issue, accepted the challenge. He, whose environment was entirely human and commonplace at that, claimed to be the transcendent Being, armed as no man ever yet was with the power and authority which belonged to the living God, who had been described by one apocalypticist after another in terms expressly chosen to exclude an earthly origin. At the moment when He was facing that last issue which extinguishes all human opportunity, He confidently expected to wield the sovereignty of Heaven.

What, then, we see is the creative Personality of Jesus waking into reality and life, not only the ideals of the ancient prophets, but that conception of the transcendent, heavenly Messiah which meets us in the pages of the apocalyptic literature. The voice of prophecy had been long silent, until once more it sounded from the mouth of John. 'We see not our tokens, there is not one prophet more,' is the complaint which finds expression in the seventy-fourth Psalm. And the hope of a heavenly deliverer, if it had had any reality among those bands of believers who 'spake often one to another' during the persecu-

tion of Antiochus or the struggles which issued in the establishment of the Roman ascendancy under Pompey, had to all appearance become little more than a literary curiosity in a later age, like the millennial expectations of the Second Advent in our own times. It was the active, dominating consciousness of Jesus that clothed it with flesh and blood and that transformed it into vital realities and living issues. The problem which was thus presented to the mind and consciousness of Jesus was therefore this. How shall He, the Man of Nazareth, appear in this transcendent character as the heavenly Messiah, and usher in the eternal reign of God? How are the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdom of our God and of His Messiah? How are men to behold that kingdom coming with power? What is the bridge between that old prophetic ideal of the rule of righteousness and the conception of a divine deliverer whose advent lifts the temporal into the eternal?

It requires no very great gift of imagination to realise how the world around Him must have appeared to one who, like our Lord, realised His communion with the Father. We have only to ask ourselves what impression the character of

Jesus makes upon us, in what light it makes us view our own lives, to reveal to us some measure of the task that He saw Himself called to undertake. The very fulness with which we are able to recognise His partnership with us in all that constitutes a true human experience serves only to bring out into more vivid contrast His immeasurable distance from us. If Jesus lives and moves and has His being in fellowship with eternal Love, then I am alienated from it. If His life is consecrated to God and to the true ends of human existence, mine misses the mark and comes short of the glory. It is no preconceived theology, no theory of inherited corruption or imputed guilt, but the testimony of a conscience awakened by the experience of a Being, sharing our opportunities and rebuking us by His use of them, that shrivels up our complacency and shatters our self-conceit. This will enable us to make a true, if inadequate, estimate of how the world must have appeared from the point of sight of Him, who knew Himself to be its Saviour. What lay between Him and the kingdom, over which in His person the Divine Rule must be established, was the pain and anguish, the death and judgment through which

alone mankind could travel upward into union with God.

Here lies what, if it were possible to regard Jesus Christ merely as a historical person, we should have to call His splendid and unique genius. He saw what the situation demanded, that the Messiah should suffer and so enter into His glory, that for Him righteousness could be fulfilled only by entering into the full experience of the race which He would fain redeem. He must give Himself a ransom for many. Let us repeat once more what the situation is that confronts the Son of Man. The kingdom can only be established on the basis of normal and right relations between God and those who are brought into fellowship with Him. But these relations are exemplified by the relationship which subsists between Jesus Himself and God. No cloud hides from Him the Divine Presence. He looks up into the sunlight of that Face and cries with perfect trust and confidence, 'My Heavenly Father.' Out of that unbroken communion all the experiences of His personal life arise. With absolute assurance He can say, 'All my fresh springs are in Thee.' His meat is to do the Father's will and to finish His work. All things

derive for Him their meaning, their proportion, their relation to one another and to Himself from that central, dominant fact. He, who is in entire and absolute sympathy with the Spirit of the universe, is so completely in harmony with its order, method, and arrangement as to realise with a fulness impossible to others all that is involved in the alienation of the great mass of men from the life and love of God. What needs to be dealt with is sin. And sin can only be expiated by death.

To mention the word *sin* is at once to run the risk of losing the attention of the reader who refuses to admit that sin has any real existence. You tell me, he argues, that Christ is a Saviour, and when I ask the question 'From what then does He save me?' you present me with this gratuitous conception of human failure, which is entirely destitute of proof. What do you mean by the guilt of our first parents inherited by all their descendants? Who were the first parents of the human race? How can responsibility incurred by them be inherited by others? Is it transmitted? If so, how can sin be guilt, which is a result of personal action, and not rather an evil tendency, which is a cause? It will be

necessary at a later stage to discuss more fully the meaning of sin. But, inasmuch as the acknowledgment of its existence is crucial, if the idea of atonement is to have any place at all in our religious consciousness, it is impossible to pass altogether from the subject here.

What we have to do is this. We must steadily dismiss from our minds all those theoretical statements by which, with more or less accuracy, theologians have attempted to express what is implied as to the condition from which Christ has rescued us. Let us regard the matter simply from a practical standpoint. As soon as men pass from the atmosphere of theological discussion, they at once bring back the word sin to express what is a stubborn fact of daily experience. They place themselves in fact in the position of the psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament, who, though they had no formulated doctrine of original sin, described the plague of the human heart in language which it is difficult for any honest man to convict of exaggeration. ‘My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up’ was the cry of one. ‘The whole heart is sick and the whole head faint’ is the exclamation of another. ‘There is no whole part in my body

by reason of my sin ' is the confession of a third. All these are untechnical efforts to express what Lord Morley in his preface to the works of Emerson describes as ' that horrid burden which the churches call sin.' Let the explanation be what it may, there it is, and only supreme folly will attempt to ignore it. And if Christ be to us the revelation of the standard, we can say with absolute confidence that the man has never yet been forthcoming who could not join in the confession that ' we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done.'

We are equally at fault when we deny the connection between sin and death.¹ ' The soul that sinneth, it shall die ' is the judgment not of theology but of conscience. The New Testament makes no attempt to distinguish between physical dissolution and its spiritual counterpart. To begin with, the analogy itself requires explanation. Why is it that the death of the body should be taken as the natural image of the soul's loss ? But the instances in which physical pain and death are the direct result of wrongdoing, in other words the penalty of sin, are far too numer-

¹ See p. 14.

ous not to suggest the connection between them. Take out of human affairs the lust, intemperance, and other passions, the indulgence of which is contrary to the mind of Christ, and none can say how much of the pain, suffering, and death, to which flesh is heir, would go with them, and of what would still remain it is safe to say that a large proportion would be traceable to their effects. What would be the relation of a sinless world to the laws of physical change, it is impossible in the absence of experience to say. Nor is the dissolution of animated bodies the same thing as the death of living persons, which is the only experience with which we are actually concerned. Broadly speaking, death appears as the forfeiture of life to mankind. It is only when it comes as relief from pain or rest from toil that it is otherwise regarded. The consequences of sin are doubtless more far-reaching than the destruction of the flesh, but they certainly include it. Personality and the bodily organism are too closely connected to admit of our disentangling them. Their interaction is too intimate to divest of moral significance even what looks like an inevitable physical process. The one is sacramental of the other. These are the con-

siderations that suggest suffering as the only road of escape from sin. The consequences of disobedience to the law of righteousness must be worked out to their last conclusion before the kingdom can come. It is not abolished until death has quitted the account. There is something unthinkable in the annihilation of consequences. They may be counteracted, diverted into new channels, made subservient to higher ends, but they cannot simply be cut off. They exist and demand to be dealt with. To treat them as non-existent is to play with facts. It is only by overcoming the stings of death that the gates of the kingdom of heaven can be thrown open.

The idea of voluntary suffering, endured by one who was not himself involved in the guilt of the many, is found in the prophetic literature of the Hebrews, though it is improbable that this destiny was ever associated with the Messiah. But the conception of a vicarious sufferer has no adequate justification in ordinary experience. 'No man may deliver his brother.' If, then, we meet with the picture of such a deliverer, it is either a bold inference from the Love of God, or a poet's heightened estimate of the value of pain

willingly borne for the sake of others. But is the latter alternative really possible? The sufferer obliterates the guilt of those for whom he suffers. Surely this is not merely a hyperbolical way of depicting the burden of sympathetic grief, which is carried in some measure by every loyal man. Is there not here a mystery which the heart feels after rather than understands? In Exodus God is paradoxically described as forgiving iniquity and sin, yet as by no means willing to clear the guilty. St. Paul, indeed, in the Epistle to the Romans, indicates the Cross as the decisive act which shows God as at once 'just and the justifier.' But, till that act is performed, faith can only throw back upon God Himself the responsibility of accomplishing it. Can Divine Love so identify itself with those, whom it essays to aid, as to create a partnership, a mutual interchange of relations between innocence and guilt?

There are times when the spirit of man, long brooding over the highest and deepest realities, penetrates as by divine inspiration, as by some instinct in tune with the subtler harmonies, into the very mind of God. Such was the case with that unknown writer, as most of us now believe

him to be, who towards the close of the Babylonian exile wrote the wonderful passage which we know as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He had shared in the sufferings of his people, of which the older prophets had warned them as the inevitable consequence of their sins. He had shared also in the repentance with which the more spiritual members of his race had recognised the justice of their punishment and the chastening value of their pains. Israel, who had so suffered, was after all the Lord's servant, the messenger whom He had sent, the beloved in whom His soul had delighted. Blind and deaf, that Servant had been untrue to his mission. Punishment had overtaken him. Then the prophet's vision changes. He sees no longer the sinners in Zion but the faithful remnant, who have been true to Jehovah and have been involved in the nation's suffering, and whose presence in the land of the captivity is a pledge of the people's return. It is they who have all along bewailed Israel's apostasy, who have never ceased to pray for Zion, and who in a limited sense are suffering, the innocent for the guilty. This leads him to portray a personality, which, though it has its roots in the spiritual Israel,

yet in the majesty of its achievement on behalf of others seems almost to stand as a thing apart. So much is this the case that, if the rest of the prophecy be read, omitting the fifty-third chapter and the three verses of the previous chapter which properly belong to it, the thought would be quite continuous, and there would be nothing to show that there was anything wanting. It is as though the mere spectacle of an innocent sufferer, the one desire of whose heart was to aid, if it were possible, those who were themselves the cause of his pangs, touched a new and unexpected chord in the heart of the speaker. As with David in Browning's *Saul* 'the wishes fall through,' and, uniting his own mighty yearning with the love and power of God, he can bid the broken-hearted to be of good cheer and 'see the Christ stand.'

It is important to look carefully at this passage, and note the form in which its teaching is conveyed. First of all we must dismiss if we can, though the effort is difficult, the image of the *Ecce Homo* or the Crucified Christ. These words were written five centuries and more before the Birth of Jesus, and when we look closely at the details of the picture which the prophet presents,

it is obvious that they are not outwardly applicable to the visible circumstances of our Lord's experience. Then we must observe that, except in the first paragraph, where the Sufferer is described as 'my servant,' the prophet is not speaking in the name of Jehovah. This is very significant, because we are accustomed to think of a prophet as one who reveals God's secrets and proclaims His will. But this writer, like Jeremiah or Micah, can also look at truth from the point of view of human experience, and identify himself with those to whom 'the arm of the Lord is revealed.' Here he joins himself with those whose business it is to report their impressions of the Suffering Servant. What is revealed as from the divine side is the kingly activity of his exalted suffering, as compared with the patient martyrdom of a prophet. He deals prudently. His action is based upon the cool calculation arising out of an intimate sympathy with the purpose of God. Then it is that we are introduced to the band of bystanders, those who have in some way been implicated in the causes of his suffering. How does it affect them? How are they led to explain it? They begin, like the young and inexperienced, with a purely external

view. They see the absence of form or comeliness, and, with the instinctive horror of what is ugly, treat the Sufferer as a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men. Then, as they begin to reason, they draw the inference that what man despises God must reject. He is smitten of God, bearing the penalty of his own wrongdoing. But the uncomplaining humility with which the Servant bears his grief, the obvious innocence of his own character, have their effect in arousing the conscience of the onlookers. The pain in which he is involved is that which he shares with themselves. They recognise that what is due to them has fallen upon him. 'We indeed justly; but this man hath done nothing amiss.' So they rise to a nobler conception of the position of the Sufferer, as they penetrate beneath the surface of his affliction. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' 'There but for the grace of God goes John Bradford,' exclaimed one of the English Reformers as he saw a convict led to execution. 'Here through my shame is the Lord's servant' is the cry of those in whom the sight of the wasted form is beginning to work repentance.

But there is one step further, and it is in

taking it that the prophet passes beyond the line of ordinary experience, and feels himself in possession of a truth which is not capable of daily verification. Is it a yet keener insight that can detect through the outward squalor and sordid pain that 'wise dealing' of which the prophet has spoken in the opening words of the passage? Is the observer, now thoroughly penitent and conscience-stricken, able to discern that even martyrdom is no fit designation of a passion in which there moves an active will, patiently and steadily working for the sake of the brotherhood? This is what we seem to read between the lines of the great words that follow: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement that wins peace for us was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.'

Nor must we forget the note of triumph with which the account of this great Figure reaches its climax. He has carried our sorrows. He has been led as a lamb to the slaughter. He has poured out his soul unto death. He has been numbered with the transgressors. He has borne the sin of many. He has interposed on behalf of the transgressors. Suffering, unmerited suffering,

suffering vicariously endured, suffering undertaken in order to redeem—pain such as this cannot be balked of its meed, nor frustrate of its purpose. ‘He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.’ ‘He shall divide the spoil with the strong.’ ‘He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.’ *Qui seminant in lacrymis, in exultatione metent.*

There can be no question that in this marvellous and unique writing we have a doctrine of redemptive pain. There are two senses in which vicarious suffering is well within the range of the experience of most of us. Many men and women are called upon to share sufferings for which they are themselves not responsible. Many also are called upon to suffer and even to die in the gallant effort to save or help others. But what is here set before us is more than this. Suffering is presented as the means by which salvation is actually wrought. This is what no experience apart from that of the Christian has ever actually given, and yet this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is evidence not only that it is thinkable, but that it has actually been thought. We may go further, and say that it has been thought out.

For we are enabled to see the mind of the thinker at work, led on step by step as from the known to the unknown, till the final conclusion appears as the natural and almost inevitable result. Nor have we here an attempt to account for and explain the work of our actual Redeemer and the experiences to which it has given rise. As has already been said, these sentences were written five or six centuries before the death and resurrection of Christ had become the possession of the human race. Contemplation of suffering in its higher forms, profound realisation of human need, strong faith in the living purpose and conquering power of God—these three forms of experience may be said to be the basis on which the prophetic spirit makes its great venture, the platform from which the mind leaps off into the future. It is a great hypothesis of divine action.

One thing remains to be said. We have said that this portraiture of the Suffering Servant is a unique phenomenon alike in the history of human thought and in the literature of the Bible. There is, however, one qualification, and that an important one, which it is necessary to add. Dr. A. B. Davidson has pointed out that the com-

parison of the Servant to a lamb, which is led to the slaughter, is taken from the customs of Hebrew ritual and sacrifice. The idea is contained in the phrase, 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.' The image present in the mind is that of the sacrificial victim, over which, as hands are laid upon the head, are confessed the sins of those on whose behalf the offering is made. The earlier prophets had represented tendencies which were opposed to the priestly traditions of popular worship, as they declared the mind of Him, who will have mercy and not sacrifice. On the other hand, their successors of a later age, which witnessed the development and codification of the national system of worship, show a disposition, not to criticise ceremonial as a vain endeavour to evade moral obligations in the service of God, but to discover the leading principles of communion with God which are symbolised and, as it were, felt after in the sacred ritual. They take a less superficial, a more penetrating view of practices which to the spiritual mind at first appear superstitious in their origin and materialising in their results. It is in this way that the sacrificial traditions of his race come to the aid of this

Evangelical Prophet in his passionate endeavour to express a truth which can only embody itself in symbol, because it transcends experience. The reflective mind ought not to misunderstand the conventional transference of guilt to the head of a creature so palpably incapable of representing even a single human being as an animal victim. The fifty-third of Isaiah is just the form in which enlightened thought, alive to the ethical necessities of man's situation, has become able to interpret that which has been inarticulately expressed in all propitiatory sacrifice. Even the darkest rites, with which the conscience of men has driven them to approach the God who hides Himself, have their teaching. If we could only escape from that false conception of evolution, which insists on explaining the highest developments in terms of the crudest origins instead of interpreting man's pitiful beginnings in the light of his wonderful achievements, we should be more ready to perceive how the modern science of comparative religion justifies the instinctive use of the Hebrew ceremonial here made by the prophet.

We have now to see how Jesus of Nazareth,

from the very outset of His public ministry, set before Himself the way of sorrows, indicated in this ancient writing, as the path by which His glory as the heavenly Messiah was to be attained. He is never represented as citing this passage, save in one instance (Luke xxii. 37). Nor does He set Himself to correspond to the outward details of the portrait. There were times, no doubt, when He did consciously identify Himself with details in some prophetic picture, as when He rode into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass. In this case it is not so. Our Lord never bore our sicknesses in the sense of falling under the yoke of disease. Nor did He make His grave with the wicked, unless the term be so generalised as to include all the children of men. What He does is so to penetrate to the very marrow of the prophetic words that we, who read them, unconsciously evacuate them of much of their immediate meaning, and forget that the loathsome figure, full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, is very different to the outward eye from the Man of Sorrows who stood before Pontius Pilate. But this fact is itself the evidence of the essential unity that annihilates the accidental difference.

We have become accustomed to the thought that it 'behoved the Christ to suffer,' because for Christians the life and death of Jesus have become the key to the interpretation of the Old Testament, as of the whole human story. But it was in the consciousness of Christ Himself that the two ideas—the Deliverer and the Sufferer—became indissolubly and for ever united. What the writer of the later chapters of Isaiah meant by his great utterance does not primarily concern us. What the words would have meant, or would have come to mean, had Jesus Christ never come into the world to achieve His victory over death has no practical bearing for us. There was nothing Messianic about them until the Messiah adopted them. They stood for an achievement which any servant of the Lord might win, if he were really capable of fulfilling them. What Isaiah had portrayed in the ideal Son of David, what Daniel had outlined in the Son of Man, what the Evangelical Prophet had described in the Suffering Servant, these became three facets in the character of that Strong Deliverer which Christ knew Himself to be destined to become. It is this consciousness of Jesus which is the supremely important thing.

What, then, is the evidence upon which our knowledge of that consciousness rests? There is no event in the public career of Jesus, prior to His Passion, which is more strongly marked than the act by which His ministry is initiated, His baptism at the hands of John.¹ Each of the Synoptic Gospels is careful to record it. The narrative of St. Mark is the simplest of all, and,

¹ Here the critics, or some of them, would intervene. They would question the authenticity of this narrative, as a record of what actually occurred, on the ground of its improbability. They would say that, while Jesus might well have come among the crowd to John's baptism, He could not have been identified by the Baptist in this conspicuous manner. I do not say that I agree. But so convinced am I that the Gospel is not affected in the main lines of its presentation by any critical results, that I am prepared for the sake of argument to grant the point. But it seems to me more than improbable that such a story could ever have found its way into the common Synoptic tradition, if Jesus had not been baptized at all. And, if this be so, then at once we are confronted with a salient fact in His career. In view of His future relations with John, how came He to have enrolled Himself among his disciples? In view of His sense of complete fellowship with the Father, how came He to submit to a baptism of repentance? If the Synoptic story represents the spiritual experience of Jesus, that is the answer. I cannot doubt that, whatever else may be said either of the Baptism or of the Temptation, both narratives accurately reflect this experience, as interpreted by Jesus to His disciples. In the text I have noticed other indications of what I believe to be Jesus' early anticipations of suffering. And, in any case, the Voice of the Baptism is repeated in the case of the Transfiguration, which came within the experience of the disciples themselves.

perhaps, represents most nearly the original tradition. On the other hand, the mention of the Baptist's surprise and of our Lord's reply to his expression of astonishment, as given in St. Matthew, serve to bring out more forcibly the originality of Jesus' conviction concerning the work that lay before Him. 'Suffer it to be so now,' He says, 'for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' The rite, which John administered, was a baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. To fulfil righteousness, to do the will of God, is an end as universal as it is indefinite. But Jesus does not commit Himself to a conventional commonplace when He makes the solemn declaration. It is a specific destiny which He discerns for Himself. He must fulfil all righteousness, the whole will of God as it exists for Him under the special circumstances of His mission. *Thus*, by claiming His share in a baptism that in some sense identifies Him with the sins and shortcomings of mankind, thus and in no other way does it become Him to accomplish the righteous will of God. He must put Himself alongside of those who through much tribulation are to enter into the kingdom. If the will of the Father was through Him to bring many sons to

glory, then it was fitting that the Captain of their salvation should be made perfect through suffering. Here at the very outset of the Saviour's career we have that clear conviction that it became Messiah to suffer, in which He finally faced the supreme trial of Calvary.

But the chief significance of the Baptism lies in the voice from heaven: 'Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.' It matters very little by what channel this great conviction reached the spirit of Jesus. Whether a sound was heard, accompanying an external descent of the Holy Ghost in what St. Luke calls 'bodily form,' or whether the language that suggests these outward phenomena is merely a method of conveying the idea of those spiritual realities which were experienced by the Saviour when He came up out of the water, is of small moment to us now. What does concern us is the assurance thus given that from the very commencement of His ministry Jesus was aware alike of the work He had to do, and of the general lines on which it must be accomplished.

'Thou art my Son.' These are the words of the first of that group of psalms, which the Jews themselves regarded as Messianic and on the

details of which there can be no doubt that Jesus had long meditated. 'I will tell of the decree,' so runs the second psalm; 'the Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son.' What was the power that rested on the Son of Man, when by this act of solemn washing in the Jordan He had identified Himself with His people, but the assurance that God had indeed given Him the heathen for His inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession? 'Thou art my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.' What is this but the form in which God is represented in the second part of Isaiah as describing His Servant? 'Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him.' This gift of the Spirit, then, had another message for the mind and will of Jesus. It revealed to Him the method no less than the goal of His life's work. He was not to compel but to serve; not to strive but to suffer; not to be ministered unto but to minister; not to lift up His voice in the street but to make intercession for the transgressors. It does not matter whether the form which His service of suffering was to take was fully before the Redeemer's mind from the outset or whether, as is more

probable, He to some extent followed the leading of events in determining the manner of its accomplishment. The Gospel story becomes almost unreal, if we suppose that the breach with the synagogue, the hostility of the Pharisees, the treachery of Judas, the execution under sentence of the Roman governor, were all foreseen. If the career of Jesus was a truly human one, as the narrative suggests, then circumstances must have played their part in its development. We cannot imagine Him as relieved from the ordinary necessity of adapting His course to the situations as they arose. Nor do we find that absorbing preoccupation with the Cross, as the goal to which His steps were tending, until after the confession of St. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi. It was not until then that 'He set His face to go to Jerusalem.'

But we have seen ample reason for affirming that the Baptism, as understood by Christ Himself, was a solemn act of consecration to a work of suffering. The liberation of His fellow-men could only be won at infinite cost to Himself. The anguish through which alone the kingdom could be established must fall upon Himself. Not that His service will relieve those, on whose

behalf He suffers, from the necessity of themselves suffering. On the contrary, He makes large demands on the heroism of those who would follow Him. They must be prepared to give up children and home and wife for His sake. They must look forward to persecution and hatred. The 'elect' will not be exempted from the woes that are to come upon the earth, even though for their sake the days may be shortened. Those, who would be nearest to Himself in glory, are asked whether they are able to share His baptism and bitter cup. Nor may they stop short at the very last extremity of pain, and shrink from carrying a criminal's cross in order that they may come after Christ. The mystery of the Suffering Servant, as it was disclosed to the mind of Jesus, did not appear to Him, any more than to us, to involve the transference of all the consequences of sin from the guilty transgressors to the innocent sufferer. There is no suggestion of this in the prophecy, and it would not accord with the plain facts of experience. In no case do sinners themselves bear all the consequences of their sins, nor would it serve any good purpose, even if it were possible, to relieve them of the whole of that part of the consequences which does fall upon them.

What the prophet says is that 'he shall bear their iniquities.' The peace which they sought, who came to the baptism, which Jesus shared, was the peace of a quiet conscience. They were baptized 'unto the remission of sins.' What Jesus had to do was to 'save His people from their sins.' The axe was laid to the root of the trees. The kingdom of God was at hand. Who should be able to abide the day of His coming? Who should stand before the Son of Man? The Suffering Servant is 'wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.'

Throughout our Lord's whole career the great task, which He feels to be imposed upon Him by the Father, rises majestically above all other considerations as the determining motive. There is always that splendid detachment even from the most crowded activities, which impresses us with the sense that He is reserving Himself for an hour which is not yet come. He is never absorbed in the occupation of the moment. He is not the busy man throwing himself into each opportunity, as though for the nonce it were his whole world, and there were no interest beyond it. He does not rise to successive occasions till at length He is big enough to encounter the last. It is only in the

Cross that His personality finds its full expression. Till He reaches Calvary He is always going on His way, quickening the pace from day to day as the end approaches. There is nothing premature in the death of Christ. The tragedy does not consist in the hopes suddenly quenched, the possibilities ruthlessly cut off, the beneficent life abruptly terminated by a wicked sentence and a shameful death. On the contrary, the mind that contemplates it instinctively realises that this is the one opportunity that is big enough for Him, that here are concentrated all the possibilities and all the hopes which connect themselves with Him. The Cross and the Christ are henceforth one. It is as though He had hung there from the beginning, and would still hang there to the end. To be crucified is the characteristic activity of the Christ. He left nothing of Himself behind when He went to Calvary.

St. Mark interposes between the Baptism and the actual beginning of the Galilean ministry a brief notice of the fact that Jesus retired into the wilderness, where He underwent a great spiritual experience, the first outcome of the new Power that had laid hold of His life. The Temptation is, of course, not part of public history, but it is

obviously intensely real. Its force depends upon the recoil of the flesh from the pathway of suffering and service, that intimate connection with the sins of men, which the experience of the Baptism had revealed to Jesus as His destiny. It is precisely the same shrinking which at the further end of the approach to Golgotha flings Him on His knees with a 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' The real import of His mission breaks out even in the early days of the ministry. He has not come to occupy a few years of energetic life with a beneficent activity. 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' He says to the paralytic, whose friends let him down through the roof. 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners' is the reply to those who criticised His attendance at the tax-gatherer's feast. The hostility which these actions provoked on the part of the influential Pharisees may have aroused some vision of the form which His suffering was likely to take. 'The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them' are the words He addresses apparently soon after the previous encounters, when complaint is made that His disciples do not fast. How clearly even then the Lord is looking forward to the accomplishment

of a work, the conditions of which are far other than those of the lakeside ministry in Galilee ! But, whatever may be said of the earlier part of the narratives, there can be no doubt whatever about the mind and purpose of Christ after the Transfiguration and the apostolic confession at Cæsarea Philippi.

It has been suggested that the Transfiguration is chronologically earlier than the Confession, and that Christ's words—'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father'—addressed to St. Peter after the acknowledgment of the Messiahship, refer to what had passed upon the mountain. Whether this be so or not, there can be little doubt that this episode forms a new point of departure, as though some Rubicon had been crossed in the journey towards the Cross. Once again the voice of heavenly interpretation is heard, 'This is my beloved Son,' and it would seem that it represents an experience common to Jesus Himself and the three disciples. Whether the confession was made prior to the vision of the King in His beauty, or whether that vision came as a remarkable confirmation of it, we have here the starting-point for those precise and direct utterances in which the Saviour dis-

closes His own conviction of the only way by which the Son of Man may reach the Throne of His glory. 'He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and be killed, and after three days rise again.'

It is the last part of this teaching that reveals the true meaning of the whole. 'After three days must the Son of Man rise again.' Jesus does not say, 'I am going up to Jerusalem, and I know that the forces of hostility will prove too strong for Me, and My death is therefore inevitable.' What He does say in effect is this, 'You have acknowledged Me as the heavenly Messiah. Know, then, that this Messiah, this Son of Man, can only bring in the Kingdom by Himself dying and rising again. Only so can He transform this weak, sinful order into a new-created world, a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. I turn deliberately away from all the opportunities of service, which My sojourn among men affords, in order that I may fulfil the one purpose for which I was sent. I go up to Jerusalem, not to undergo My fate, but to court, to provoke, to precipitate death, that so I may rise again.' The disciples are amazed, nor do

they understand. All regard the enterprise as an act of madness. 'Let us go, that we may die with Him,' says one. 'This be far from Thee, Lord,' cries another. They doubted and despaired. They questioned what the rising from the dead might mean. And at the last they all forsook Him and fled.

But Jesus went right on. He can only redeem by that supreme act of service which henceforth is the standard of all sacrifice. He is giving His life a ransom for many. He has a baptism to be baptized with, and how is He straitened until it be accomplished. His whole demeanour is that of a man who has gathered up all his powers of intelligence, affection, and will for one great act, into which he puts his whole being. Riding into Jerusalem, challenging the scribes, standing calmly before the Sanhedrin, accused before Pontius Pilate the governor, He is always the King, bending each situation as it arises to the accomplishment of His royal purpose. On the Cross He reigns, compelling the homage of the ages. And on the third day He rose again.

IV

WHAT THE APOSTLES PREACHED

LESS than two months after the Crucifixion apostles were already declaring the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Their relation to Him, whom they proclaimed as the Risen One, was substantially that of St. Paul, who refused to know Christ after the flesh, and of every Christian who has attained to the conviction that in Him he has found eternal life. The Lord, whom they preached, was neither the founder of a religion nor the author of a teaching, but the Living One, who had become dead, and was now alive for evermore. It is the Christ who from that day to this has been not a treasured memory but an overshadowing presence.

Whether the reports of the earliest preaching contained in the Acts of the Apostles are in any sense a transcript of the words actually used by

the first missionaries is for our purpose a matter of secondary importance. The sermons attributed to St. Paul occur in a document which is certainly the work of an eye-witness of the events which it records, and their subtle correspondence with the teaching of the Pauline epistles is a substantial guarantee that the reporter has at least provided us with the gist of what was actually spoken. And even if the same cannot be claimed for those records of the Pentecostal Church which are contained in the first twelve chapters of the book, there is reason to suppose that the author of the narrative, which has been worked into our Book of the Acts, was at pains to set down what he believed to be a fair summary of the addresses and conversations which actually took place, and is not inventing, as the classical Thucydides might have done, the discourse which he considered to be appropriate to the occasion and the speaker. But be this as it may, there can be no doubt that we have before us the earliest form in which the prophetic community of the first century bore its testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.

The first point that is conspicuously evident is this. No preaching of Jesus Christ as Saviour

and King has ever been undertaken apart from an actual experience of the Spirit. On the contrary the Gospel, though undoubtedly it involves a doctrine which is infinitely wider than experience, is in the first instance an interpretation of a present, living experience of the power of the Spirit, and would have been unintelligible apart from it. The evangelisation of the world may be described as the proclamation of the gift of the Spirit and of the conditions under which it may be received. Where there is no Pentecost there is no message. When the baptism of fire has taken place, there is a continual interchange of testimony, the Word interpreting the Spirit, and the Spirit attesting and justifying the Word.

There are certain broad facts sufficiently obvious to the men of the world as they are brought into contact with the members of the Christian community. Some change has passed upon them which distinguishes them from the mass of their fellows, who live and work upon principles that are easily explicable on ordinary assumptions. These Christians are not of the world. Their conduct cannot be referred to its customary motives and aims. There is an assurance, a conviction, a certainty in their

attitude and movements which baffles imagination. The unexpected boldness of the apostles stands in marked contrast with their perfectly natural unwillingness to face the consequences of publicly identifying themselves with Jesus in the hour of His condemnation. This was the disconcerting fact that filled the Sanhedrin with amazement, when the disciples in their turn faced the same tribunal as their Master. What was the meaning of this surprising recovery of allegiance, which seemed to make them as indifferent to consequences as the crucified Nazarene Himself? He was dead, but this irrevocable fact, far from extinguishing the last feeble flicker of a disappointed hope, had restored a confidence, which now enabled them to stand forth like their Master Himself as the accusers of their judges.

This is only one instance of the impression of power which the primitive community made upon the world with which they were brought in contact. There was a spirit and a life in their words and actions which men could neither gainsay nor resist. The new phenomenon could not be ignored. Whether it attracted or repelled, it must be reckoned with. It was the manifestation of a reserve of moral force, the sources

of which were not apparent. And those, who by baptism became members of the Christian fellowship, did so because they recognised a life which they desired to share, a character which they wanted to possess. How did they themselves account for a phenomenon which baffled their accusers ?

The Gospel finds its briefest summary in the apostolic witness to the Resurrection. 'Jesus and the Resurrection' was the subject of their preaching. The extraordinary fact which required explanation was the outbreak among the disciples of Jesus of those marvellous forces of the Spirit which had shown forth themselves in Him. What had been concentrated in the Master was now visibly diffused among the followers. But what had supervened between the two manifestations ? Jesus had died among all the ignominious circumstances of a public execution. This was the paradox of the whole situation. Men, who had forsaken Him and fled because, having thought that this was He who should have redeemed Israel, they saw in the fate that had overtaken Him, not only the end but the negation of their hopes, are now full of a splendid courage. This is not the afterglow of a

great influence, but the quickening power as of a Personality more mightily present than ever He had been before. In His Name they speak and act with an assurance, a certainty of conviction, that nothing can daunt.

For the disciples themselves there is no such paradox as confronted the unbeliever. The interval that separates the strong life of the Christian society from the Crucifixion of their Master has been bridged by a continuous experience that is itself the explanation of the spirit with which they are now animated. No fact of history is more certain than that the Christian Church established itself upon the belief that the Lord, who was crucified, had risen again from the dead and had been exalted to the right hand of God. This was a conviction that had been forced upon the apostles in spite of themselves. The anticipations of such an issue of His sufferings, which were before the mind of Christ Himself and inspired His Passion, never penetrated to the imagination of the Twelve, who could only dully question what the rising from the dead should mean. They had no sort of expectation of those experiences upon which rested the unwavering conviction, which could stand

the last and final test of martyrdom. Jesus was alive in the wholeness of His Personality. Of this they had received assurance as real and as absolute as that which relies upon the testimony of the senses, when it is checked and corroborated by the perceptions of more than one competent witness. An event had taken place within three days of the Crucifixion which altered their whole relation to that fact and gave an entirely new import to the Death of the Cross.

It was not part of the world's public history. Not to all the people but to themselves, His chosen witnesses, had Jesus shown Himself alive. But He was alive ; this was the fact of which they were no less certain than of their own existence—alive, not in the sense in which a loving piety believes that the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, but as having left nothing of Himself in the tomb and as having passed the limitations of mortality. They had not seen Him, as men have often claimed to see the spirits of the departed, but they had been brought into actual, external contact with Him. Whether we are to press the phrase which the Book of Acts puts into the mouth of St. Peter, when in the house of Cornelius he is represented as saying

that the apostles 'did eat and drink with their Master after He rose from the dead,' may be doubtful. But there is no uncertainty as to the sort of intercourse that it is meant to express, nor of the type of reality to which the speaker believed the risen Christ to conform. His exaltation to the right hand of God, by which the Christians of the first age expressed the transcendent side of their tremendous experience, was not incompatible with a complete restoration from the grave of His complete manhood. The pains of hell could not 'hold' Him. Such is the phrase by which this aspect of the fact is represented in St. Peter's Pentecostal speech. No such language would have been appropriate unless the belief, which it expresses, were different in kind from a conviction that the soul of Jesus survived the body. We are entitled to approach the particular narratives of the Resurrection, which the New Testament preserves, with this consideration. The experiences of the disciples after the Crucifixion govern their whole subsequent attitude towards Jesus Christ. Whatever may have been their precise form, they were as far removed as we can imagine from exalted states of inward consciousness. Nothing short of

the simple, straightforward statement that they 'had seen the Lord' would have been a sufficient and satisfactory expression of what actually occurred. The experience was common. It was shared not only by a number of individuals, but also by representative groups of believers. The risen Christ had dealt with the brotherhood collectively as partner in their converse one with another.

This, then, was their secret. As yet the world did not and could not know it. Witnesses of the Resurrection these men might be, but as yet there was no message which the world could receive. It had seen and heard nothing. An empty tomb could be the guaranty of nothing, unless it should be succeeded by manifestations of the Risen One. Its effect is temporary, immediate, preparatory. If the silence remains unbroken, not even those, who have witnessed it, will draw any permanent inference from its vacancy. It creates a problem concerning the disposal of the crucified Body, and there is an end. At best it provides an opportunity for the ingenious like, let us say, the mystery of *Edwin Drood*. Nor would the salvation of the world have been much advanced by the mere announce-

ment of those, who claimed to be witnesses of the fact, that He who died on Calvary had returned from the grave to enter upon a larger and more exalted life. Would even the recipients of these vivid and at the time intensely real manifestations have retained the impression through the vicissitudes of a long future, like that which awaited St. John, unless the experiences of a constantly receding past had been the prelude to an ever present communion with God in Christ, attested by the realised power of an indwelling Spirit? Would not the influences of the commonplace years have so blurred the memories of these marvellous experiences as to suggest that, after all, they had their birth in fancy rather than fact? No doubt this would have been so. And as for others, the eyes that had not seen, the hands that had not handled, such reports would have had no significance.

What the apostles were to publish was not the mere fact that Jesus had died and risen again, but the good news of a crucified and risen Saviour. They were to offer to their fellow-men redemption through the name of Jesus; not a mere promise of deliverance, but the immediate realisation of the remission of sins, the actual establishment of

communion with God. The confidence that God can and will save us is not the same thing as the assurance, the knowledge, nay, the experience that He has done so. It is no more the same thing than the confident hope that Jesus would heal the sick and cleanse the leper was equivalent to the joyful realisation of recovered health. The attitude, therefore, of the apostolic community, when they had learned the great secret that Jesus was exalted, was one of eager expectation, of waiting for the promise of the Father, of confident hope that Christ would show Himself by a divine exercise of power to be a Prince and a Saviour. Pentecost crowned their experience. Jesus was indeed mighty to save. Henceforth their business was to hold up this salvation before the eyes of all men. 'Repent and be baptized every one of you and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

If, however, we were to confine ourselves to the statement that the witness of the apostles was an appeal to the actual experience of the Spirit, which indwelt the members of the Christian community, we should be in danger of substituting a form of religious mysticism for the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is the connection of the spiritual life of the Church with the historical facts of the Life and Death of Christ, linked as they were by the apostolic experience of the Resurrection to a doctrine of His Person, His present relation to the community of believers, and His future manifestation as Judge of mankind and King of the universe, which differentiates Christianity from all forms of spiritual religion, which rely on personal experience and the inward light apart from any definite contact with history. It cannot be too urgently insisted that Christianity is not identical with spirituality, that its experiential side is not opposed to its dogmatic basis, and that while it is a religion it is also a theology.

It would be well, I think, if the modern disciples of higher religious thought would clear up their ideas of the relation of what is called Mysticism to the truths of Christianity. Of course, the word mysticism may be so defined as to be co-extensive with the spiritual, and as Christianity, whatever else it may be, is essentially spiritual, to that extent, but to that extent only, it may be described as mystical. But it is highly misleading to think of the Christian religion as though

it were a form of mysticism. For what has mysticism hitherto been understood to denote ? What are the ideas immediately presented to the mind when the word is used ? Surely the term is applied to those quasi-philosophic systems which teach a union of the soul with God, direct, immediate, and independent of outward forms. External facts on this theory suggest rather than mediate the relationship. The characteristic ideas are absorption of the finite in the infinite, and the removal, not only of the moral barrier between the soul and God, but of all lines of personal distinction. Its notion of atonement is not reconciliation but mystical union. The theory of the universe, to which it is naturally allied, is pantheism.

We cannot understand the apostles' appeal to experience unless we recognise that it is as far as may be from these conceptions. The Christian life is the guaranty of the Christian Gospel, because it proceeds from it as effect from cause. The Gospel mediates the life. They are mutually related because both are the offspring of the one and selfsame Spirit of God, who proceeds from the one to the other in a continuous line of efficacious action. The disciple of Jesus, when he experi-

ences the operation of the divine Spirit, whether in himself or in the community of which he is a member, recognises both what it is and how it has come. He knows what it is. The Christian life has specific form and outline, determined by the manifestation of the Spirit as it is realised in the Life and Death of Jesus. He knows how it has come. The Christian life is the direct result of the sending forth by Jesus of His own Spirit, consequent on His exaltation through death to the right hand of power, as King, Saviour, and Judge of God's spiritual city. And so it has been well said that no piety can justly call itself Christian that is not 'morally and religiously consistent with the truth and grace of the historical Jesus.'

One of the latest critics of the New Testament, Albert Schweitzer, lays it down as a fundamental proposition, that there is a dogmatic element in the history of Jesus. By this he means that the story of Christ, as we possess it, is not merely a narrative, out of which to construct, as best we may, the theory of His Personality and Work. Jesus Himself supplies the key. His consciously expressed theory of His own destiny dominates and moulds the history.

His public life followed other lines than would be expected if He had merely been influenced by the obvious 'signs of the times.' However this may be, it is certainly true of the Gospel, as it has been presented from the very first age of the Church, that, while it points to the Life of the Spirit, that continuous stream of influence and power which has passed down the channel of the centuries, drawing the souls of men into its current, it nevertheless sets this fact, this experience concerning which the invitation is 'Taste and see' in relation to a great dogmatic, without which the idea of the Spirit would be deprived of all proper content and meaning.

This may be illustrated from a source familiar to the ordinary reader. Those, who have been brought up upon the Church Catechism, will at once remember that there are two separate answers declaring the meaning of baptism, which may be compared together as doctrinal and experimental. First of all the child is instructed that he has been 'made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' Now this is pure theology, a dogmatic statement which admits of no direct test. But later he is further told that the thing

signified by baptism is a 'death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.' Here we come at once into the region of experience. This is a change which may and ought to become real for the Christian believer. Teach the former alone, and Christianity must remain as much a question of words and names as it was to Gallio. Teach the latter only, and the spiritual life is in danger of becoming, as it was to Simon Magus, an unrelated and unintelligible power. Teach both and the dogma and the experience support one another.

We have, then, to inquire what was the dogmatic interpretation of the gift of the Spirit, which formed the message of the apostolic preaching. How did they set this new power, manifested at Pentecost and indwelling the Christian brotherhood, in its true relation to that God who is the personal life of the universe? One thing at least is certain, that the Resurrection had fixed for ever as their deepest and unassailable conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. The citations from the Psalms, which are ascribed to St. Peter, make it abundantly plain that the disciples had now adopted the attitude towards the Old Testament which had been characteristic

of their Master. St. Paul is described as interpreting the second Psalm of the Resurrection. The act by which Jesus of Nazareth was raised out of death was in this sense a begetting of the Son, that by and through it the heavenly Messiahship was in fact attained. He was exalted as a Prince and a Saviour. He was at the right hand of God, who had thus made Him Lord and Christ. His disciples are now able to think of Him, who in the days of His flesh had been their Master and Friend, under conditions of Godhead. Henceforth they associate the thought of Him with their ideas of God. They expect that He will act towards them as God. We are, of course, as yet very far from the precise definitions of a later age. We are not necessarily in presence of any distinct theory of the pre-existence of the Saviour, such as that with which the Church was soon to be made familiar in the writings of St. Paul or the Gospel according to St. John. The statements of the early chapters of Acts may be dogmatic; yet they are not expressed in terms of Nicene theology. But, as we saw in the last chapter, the heavenly Messiah was a figure familiar to the religious thinkers of our Lord's time, a celestial being, who existed in the divine

purpose and foreknowledge from the foundation of the world, through whom God would save and judge His people, and who was to come in the clouds with the angels. That is the figure with which Christ consciously and manifestly identified Himself. And now, convinced by the Resurrection, the disciples are prepared to stake everything upon the same conviction. Jesus of Nazareth has in fact risen above the limitations of mortal life. The promise of His Transfiguration has been fulfilled. Henceforth they expect to see Him as Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. He has been exalted. He now reigns. He will come again.

It will thus be seen that their conception of the Messianic Kingdom, of which Jesus was now fully established as the King, corresponded to what we have tried to show was foreshadowed by Christ Himself in the later teaching of His Ministry. His own triumph over death was the guaranty that it would be established, not in some far-off Paradise, but upon the earth. No doubt it was wider than any terrestrial kingdom, even though that were universal, involving the gathering together of the nations. It would include the

dead with the living, the new heaven with the new earth. It extended to principalities and powers in heavenly places, as well as to the whole race of men. But Christ must now really reign over the world as Judge of the nations and Saviour of His people. The very fact that the speedy return of Christ in glory was almost universally expected in the early Church witnesses to the real character of what was believed with regard to the meaning of His exaltation. The Resurrection was as much a pledge of the future as a consummation of the past. The heavens were to receive Him, veiled from mortal sight, only 'till the times of the restoration of all things.' Sufficient emphasis has not been laid upon the prominence given to Judgment in the primitive proclamation of the Gospel. Not only at Cæsarea does St. Peter declare to the household of Cornelius that he is charged 'to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead,' but St. Paul also, in his sermon at Athens, speaks of God as having 'appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained.' We shall see in the following chapter

how important it is, in considering the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, to bear in mind this primary fact. But indeed the whole thought of the primitive community is conditioned by it. We are apt to look upon the present period of what we call 'Gospel privilege' as though it were the object of Christ's work, and to think of what we call the Last Judgment as a final tag to the existing order, arising out of the necessity under which thought labours of postulating some end to things as they are. As the disciples return from the mount of the Ascension, they see the whole future as one picture. Christ reigning and Christ returning are not separate ideas. They are blended as in the apocalyptic pictures which Christ deliberately made His own. His followers are not to stand gazing into heaven. 'This Jesus shall so come.'

When the community found themselves empowered by a spirit, which they recognised as the Spirit of Jesus, and the possession of which showed them to be a society as markedly separate from the generation of this world as the Lord Himself, they hailed this transformation not as an end in itself but as the pledge of the kingdom which was to be manifested. The prophet Joel,

they remembered, had spoken of a universal outpouring of the spirit upon the people of God which was to usher in 'that great and notable day of the Lord.' Christ had warned them not to speculate upon the times and seasons when the kingdom should be set up, but to wait for the power which should descend upon themselves. This carried their thoughts back to the baptism of John, by which a penitent people had been set apart against the day of redemption. They had been bidden to look for another baptism, an outpouring of that Spirit, which is the characteristic of the kingdom, an energy as of fire, which would be to them the assurance that the Christian brotherhood was already part of that redeemed society in which Messiah was to be manifested as the visible King. Thus the ingathering of recruits for the kingdom, their incorporation by baptism into the redeemed society, was preparing the way for those 'times of refreshing,' when God would send the Christ and the Messianic purpose would be finally consummated.

We are not justified in saying that, as time elapsed and the kingdom did not come, the apostolic community recognised that they had made a mistake and readjusted their conception

of Christ's work accordingly. We never arrive at a stage in primitive Christianity when the expectation of the Second Coming passes out of the apostolic witness. Later writings, like the Fourth Gospel, bear their testimony to it. The author of Second Peter is prepared for a delay of centuries without feeling that he is in any way modifying the original hope. 'With the Lord,' he says, 'a thousand years are as one day.' It is in one of the original sermons that St. Peter himself is represented as declaring that the response to the Gospel to some extent determines the hour when the Lord will come. The purpose of God, therefore, does not so predestinate the future that repentance will not hasten it or sin retard. Even if Jesus Himself believed that in a human sense the hour was just about to strike, which is by no means certain,¹ is there any reason

¹ I am fully aware that, in making this qualification, I should have the majority of the apocalyptic school against me. They would reply that in this case Jesus expressed Himself very badly, when He said, for example, that some of those, whom He addressed, would not taste of death till they saw the kingdom of God come with power. I will not apply to these utterances the criticism, which many of them would use of other portions of the Synoptic narrative, that the record has been coloured by the thoughts of interpreters. That seems to me too easy a method of adjusting history to theory. And, further, I should hold that some of the disciples did see the kingdom come with power, though not in

to suppose that the unfaithfulness of the Church's Sapphiras did not put back the hands of the clock? But in any case we all understand how in prophetic anticipation the future is necessarily foreshortened, Alp rising behind Alp as though the valleys were not. And, whatever may have been the amount of practical oblivion into which the teaching concerning Christ's manifested kingdom has fallen, the hope of the Church remains to this day, formally at any rate, what it has always been. 'To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation.'

The work of such teaching as that of the Fourth Gospel has been, not to substitute a new conception of eternal life as an ever-present possession imparted by the ever-living and exalted Christ for that of a kingdom which is about to come, but to set forth the principle upon which present grace and future glory alike rest. St.

that ultimate completeness which the world still awaits. We have only to compare St. Matthew's account of the utterance concerning 'the abomination of desolation' with the turn given to it by St. Luke—'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies'—to see that the apostolic Christians themselves recognised in the Fall of the City and the establishment of the Church in the Empire a real fulfilment of their Master's expectation. See also pp. 18 ff.

John is the great exponent of the sacramental view of the relation of God to the universe, which is both the revelation and the veil of His eternal and glorious life. It is the revelation. Therefore the Word became Flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory. Therefore also He will again be manifested, and we shall see Him as He is. It is the veil; therefore the beams of His Deity were restrained beneath the Cross and Passion; therefore also it doth not yet appear what we, who even now eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, shall be hereafter. Teaching like this is designed to help us soberly to acquiesce in the apparent delay of the Saviour's final epiphany, not to reconcile us to its disappearance from Christian hope.

This, then, is the first great aspect of the Christian Gospel as it is presented in the New Testament—the kingdom of God already come in power through the exaltation of the Son of Man, present to faith under sacrament and sign in the community of Christians, hereafter to be revealed in the visible reign of Christ over a regenerate earth, where evil is judged and righteousness crowned. So far the view is forward. Present salvation through the enrolment of peni-

tents in the ranks of the sacramental Church is the pledge of the final consummation of God's predestinating purpose.

But the eye is also cast backward. The great conviction that Christ is the heavenly Messiah, along with all the consequences of this central belief, has its origin in the assurance of His Resurrection. But this fact is the culmination of the earthly story of Jesus. It issues out of His Death. It is indeed the other side of the shield. It is the Cross in its eternal issue, and as such gives to Calvary a central significance. There is therefore little wonder that from the first the form, in which the witness of the apostles is represented as having been given, is that of an antithesis between the work of lawless men in crucifying Jesus and the action of God in raising Him. 'God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.' But if God's transcendent act is recognised as the fulfilment of a purpose, the facts which led up to it must themselves be part of the purpose. The wickedness of the Jews, the weakness of Pilate, the ignorant fanaticism of the multitude, all have their place in bringing about the great Tragedy. But we have already seen that rising

above the rest was the dominant fact of the situation. This was Christ's own conviction, that only through suffering could He become the Deliverer, giving His life a 'ransom for many.' He went straight forward to death. He was a willing victim. He had predestinated Himself to die. That would remain true, whatever had been the issue. But God had revealed the triumph of His own predestinating purpose, acting at the back of the whole story. If Jesus was the Messiah when He was raised from the dead, then God had anointed Him before 'Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together' to destroy Him. So the Death of Christ, far from being an interruption of the divine purpose, was itself foreordained. God's hand and His counsel were in it from the first. Jesus' own will to die was the reflection of His Father's foreordination. The Crucifixion, therefore, had an abiding relation to the kingdom. Its establishment was, so to speak, wrapt up in the Passion, the means whereby it was achieved. In the same breath the preacher will bring home the Death of Jesus to the conscience of his hearers as an act of which they are guilty, and proclaim that 'the things

which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled.'

It becomes perfectly clear, as the story unfolds itself, that the Resurrection produced upon the minds of the disciples precisely that result which seems to us most unlikely, while we are reading the account of their Master's vain attempts to impress them with the necessity of suffering, which lay heavy on His own spirit. Over and over again the apostolic witnesses speak of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. It is obvious that this is no chance designation. The phrase comes from the second part of Isaiah, and its use at once shows that the apostles have made the application to Jesus of the famous and familiar passages in which it is found. They, who had been unable to follow His meaning, are now of one mind with the Lord. Jesus is the 'man of sorrows.' It is He who 'is led as a lamb to the slaughter.' He is the Righteous One who justifies those whose iniquities He bears, and whose sufferings are a prevailing act of intercession. It is surely quite natural that all this should be apprehended before the Gospel settled down, as it were, into that precise and definite method

of presentation, which we owe more especially to St. Paul. Before it reaches the story of his conversion, the Book of the Acts has already given us the account of the conversation of Philip the Evangelist with the Chamberlain of Queen Candace.¹ It is the fifty-third of Isaiah that the traveller is reading when St. Philip meets the chariot. The passage which has attracted his attention, and the interpretation of which perplexes him, is that which contains the simile of the sacrificial lamb. 'Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?' Such is the eager question of the man who seems to feel himself trembling on the verge of some great discovery. 'And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture preached unto him Jesus.' It does not seem unfair to say that the Acts appears to lead up to this crucial instance of evangelisation, to be followed immediately by the conversion of him to whom we owe the crystallisation of the good news into per-

¹ I do not raise the critical question whether this narrative may not have been coloured by a Paulinist editor. The same might be said of all the early narratives of Acts. My contention simply is that the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant is represented, and, I think, quite fairly, as having been made by the primitive community and not by any one teacher.

manent and standard form as the Word of the Cross, the Gospel of Christ Crucified.

The kingdom, the remission of sins, the gift of the Spirit, these mutually related aspects of salvation, are all of them dependent for their realisation on the Death of Christ. They are reached in no other way. Therefore they are its results, its effects, its products. Jesus has become the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Saviour, by His own personal encounter with the pain which, as He foresaw, must first be endured and overcome. God is mighty to save because He was strong to suffer. That is the witness of the primitive Christian community. Of course this does not mean that they isolated the Cross from the character and career of Him who suffered upon it, as though a distinction could be drawn between what a personality is in itself and the successive actions in which it is manifested. In overcoming the stings of death He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But this is not as though we could draw a sharp difference between the moment when the last agonies of the Cross were extinguished in death and the human story of a life absolutely surrendered to the will of the Father by which the Passion was

preceded. What we mean is that Calvary gives its true orientation to the Saviour's earthly career, so that nothing else but the Cross can become its symbol. There is nothing accidental or even merely typical in the final act. It is the pith and marrow of His work, so that for Him, as for none other of the sons of men, the brief years of His pilgrimage were the valley of the shadow of death. Neither the wilderness of temptation nor the mountain of His teaching, neither the scenes of His ministry of mercy nor the Garden of the Agony can epitomise His Sacrifice. The Cross, and the Cross only, can do that. Therefore the instinct of the Apostolic Church was right in fixing for all time the Death of Jesus as the subject of Christian preaching. God is manifested, He is active towards us, in the Cross. And the message which is addressed to us on every page of the New Testament is this : ' I am the living one, and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.'

V

JUSTIFICATION

IN the reredos of St. Paul's Cathedral, where the great facts of the Christian Creed are grouped round the central picture of Redemption, appear the two figures of St. Peter and St. Paul, which represent the original dedication of the Church. This circumstance, however, by no means exhausts the significance of the two apostles in relation to the message which it was their task to deliver. For the apostolic witness is something far more intimately related to the divine revelation than the work of that body of missionaries who, throughout the Christian centuries, have extended the borders of the Christian fellowship by telling out among the nations that the Lord Jesus Christ is King. For the missionary succession has been occupied in proclaiming the Saviour as interpreted by the 'Word of the Cross' which the apostles delivered. It is, to say the least, doubtful how far the message of

reconciliation could be reconstructed from the Synoptic Gospels alone, if it were possible to shut off or to suppress the other books of the New Testament. While it is becoming increasingly difficult to explain the Christ of the Synoptists on naturalistic principles, it is nevertheless true that the Jesus who passes before us in their pages, a wonderful and radiant Personality, is only moving towards the accomplishment of that historic work, the experience of which alone constitutes the Gospel. It is the exalted Jesus whom Paul preached. The Jesus who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, or uttered the parables, is potentially a Saviour. The Christ who has died, yea, rather who is risen again, actually redeems. The Synoptic story was, in fact, composed in the *milieu* of a society where this revelation was accepted. Its intention and purpose were conditioned by it. It fills out the faith of the Church rather than provides it with an adequate basis. Christ's work can only be understood in the effect which it exercises upon the race for which it was accomplished. The Synoptic record, therefore, unless it be accompanied by such a commentary as that which is supplied by the Fourth Gospel or the epistles of St. Paul, or

at least by the Pentecostal preaching, is not the whole 'Fact of Christ.'

We must never forget that the Coming of the Holy Ghost is as much part of the Gospel as the Crucifixion. As has already been said, the Resurrection, which is the link between the life of the historic Jesus and what we claim to be the supernatural life of the Church, could never have been preached apart from those subsequent happenings, of which the experience of the day of Pentecost is representative. Whether it actually occurred or not, it could never have been a fact for us apart from the realisation of the exalted Christ as a redeeming presence, of which the Spirit is the assurance. Consequently, we are bound to enlarge our view of the Gospels by the testimony of the rest of the New Testament, which is equally apostolic, and much of which is actually prior in composition. This is why the Christian community formed a New Testament canon, which included the other writings as equally authoritative with the Gospels themselves. Doubts, which may be entertained with regard to this document or that, such as Second Peter or the Apocalypse, do not in the least invalidate the general principle. The standard

by which the Church distinguished what it recognised as Scripture from all other Christian writings was apostolicity. This undoubtedly meant that the saving Christ was not merely the Christ who comes before us in the evangelical record, but the Christ as He is interpreted by the apostles. The facts are not fully facts apart from their significance, and that significance is not fully understood till the coping-stone of Pentecost is placed upon the building. 'He comes to us,' says Schweitzer at the conclusion of his *Quest*, 'as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not.' This writer recognises the mystery of His Person, which critical solvents of the Gospels have been powerless to destroy, and claims for those who obey Him the promise of a revelation of His name. 'They shall learn in their own experience who He is.' But the Church preaches a Christ whom it knows. The record is, in fact, larger than the Synoptics. Christianity is apostolic. The Christ is set before us once and for all in the New Testament taken as a whole. Peter and Paul and John know Him in whom they have believed. The Redeeming Son of God is something more than a discovery

which each has to make for himself. It is a disclosure offered to the faith of all.

This is the reason why the mind of the apostles has to be studied in an entirely different way from those literary remains which record the experience of the later ages of the Church. We stand alongside an Athanasius or an Augustine in a sense in which our thought is not parallel with that of St. Paul. There is a dividing line between the whole of the New Testament and all that succeeds to it which has been universally recognised by Christians of every period. The apostolic interpretation of Jesus is like that which is ascribed to the risen Christ Himself. No doubt it is given through the medium of fallible men. The terms, the ideas, the language in which the Saviour is presented are those which belonged to the times in which the writers lived. We must always try to get to the thing which lies beneath the word, and recognise the mental and spiritual struggle through which the truth has found expression. But we are not at liberty to say that these men were wholly wrong in the way they apprehended Christ. The Saviour is what they proclaim Him to be, or He is nothing. We cannot hope to disentangle an entirely different

Christ from their 'misreading' of His Person and Work. Be the history of Christendom what it may, the Christ of the apostles is the only basis on which it rests. There is none other.

It is thus scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of the epistles of the New Testament, and more especially the epistles of St. Paul. They are something more than the earliest efforts of the Christian mind, reflecting on its own experience, to set down in more or less methodical fashion what is involved, first for the individual, and then for the world, in the work of Jesus Christ. This they are, no doubt. But they are also an expression of the Gospel itself under forms which display His creative Personality as it is apprehended in saving power by those who open their hearts to it. The object of the present chapter is to take the leading idea of the Pauline soteriology, or St. Paul's theory of salvation, namely, Justification by faith, and to show how it interprets, or brings out into explicit expression, what is involved in the characteristic acknowledgment of the Christian, that it is through Jesus Christ, and through Him alone, that he has come to God and entered into communion with Him.

Nothing could well be further from the truth than the type of criticism which sees in the great argument of the Epistle to the Galatians and the first eight chapters of Romans nothing but a controversial device adopted by the apostle in defence of the attitude he had assumed towards the Hebrew law. St. Paul, it has been alleged, had to square his deliberate rejection of the Mosaic system, so far at any rate as the Gentiles were concerned, with his own vehement conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. How could he with the same breath tell his Gentile hearers that Jesus was the Redeemer whom the Jews expected, and that, if they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses this Messiah would profit them nothing? That, so it has been argued, was the problem which the apostle of the Gentiles had to meet, and which he actually did meet by suggesting that Christ was the end of the law, having fulfilled all its requirements on behalf of those who should become believers in Him. It is sufficient to reply that none can read the first chapter of Galatians, laying the foundations of the passionate appeal, the stern rebuke, which is the motive of that letter, deep in the writer's own story; no one can hear the clear note of

personal experience in the seventh of Romans, in the key of which the whole of the earlier chapters is obviously set, without being convinced that St. Paul's doctrine of salvation from beginning to end is wrought out of his own life. There is nothing formal in his theology. It is his own experience universalised and then intellectually expressed.

'It pleased God to reveal His Son in me.' That is how St. Paul himself describes the intimate contact between his own soul and Him whom he was to proclaim among the nations. That contact was the connecting link between the work of Christ and the preaching of the apostle. God had called him by His grace. The free act of God's spontaneous favour had been the instrument of that great change which we call his conversion. There is something essentially typical in the conversion of St. Paul. It is typical just because it is exceptional. Those conditions which too often in the common life modify or obscure the real action are in this case absent. The instance is, so to speak, isolated. What takes place is clear-cut, well-defined. There is no confusion of issues. We have a standard presentation of what conversion in the

Christian sense of the word really means. First of all, there is the sharp distinction between the old and the new, which is not always, or usually, so obviously concentrated upon one point in time, as it is here. Then, secondly, it is easy to see in the case of St. Paul that the distinction between the two states of life is a spiritual one. For Saul of Tarsus was not an evil liver, steeped in moral degradation, in sensual or worldly sin. The change which passed upon him had nothing to do with turning over a new leaf. Such moral revolutions may be, and have been, caused in many ways that have no discernible connection with the recognition of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Prudence, human affection, moral ideal, are not the only causes which have been responsible for real reversals in the lower planes of ethical conduct. Many of those outward changes which often follow conversion, where they are needed, may occur again and again without any recovery of spiritual personality, or reconciliation of the will to the love and service of God. But there was no question of such lower changes as these in the case of St. Paul. He had always lived a blameless life according to the strictest sect of his religion. Those strong

self-accusations of his after-life, which led him to describe himself as an injurious man, as the chief of sinners, as a wretch whose one cry was for deliverance from the body of sin and death, are the outpouring of a sensitive conscience, which had been led to realise what the persecution of the Christians really involved. As a matter of fact Saul must have stood high among the members of the society in which he moved, as a man of honour and integrity. But it is just this fact that makes the event, which changed every value in the life and conduct of St. Paul, appear in its true light as a surrender of the spirit to God in Christ. Thirdly, it did not, in the ordinary sense of the word, involve a change of religion. Of course Judaism is to-day, as distinct from Christianity, a closed system, which must be renounced when Christ is embraced. But what is meant is that there was no such change of 'religious opinions' as is seen when, for example, a Roman Catholic becomes a Protestant or *vice versâ*. And lastly, not only was the experience very definite, but it was also very vivid. Newman has spoken of those moments which occur in the lives of many, if not of most,

when for our consciousness it seems as though there were but two luminously self-evident things in the whole world, the soul and the God who made it. It is one of such moments which is described with a point of steel in the story of St. Paul's conversion. The man knows himself to be in the presence of God. 'Who art Thou, Lord ?' is his question. About the answer there is no uncertainty—'I am Jesus the Nazarene whom thou persecutest.' God lays hold of him through the mediation of the very Personality, whom in the name of God he had made it the business of his life to resist.

Such an experience as this could not but enable any man with powers of reflection and generalisation, such as St. Paul possessed in no ordinary degree, to give not only to his contemporaries, but to succeeding ages, an account of what was involved for the personal life of the individual in surrender to the message of the Gospel. If the language, which he uses, is that which naturally came to a man of his traditions and antecedents, the language must be interpreted by the experience ; the experience must not be limited by the language. Just as Jesus Himself had taken the ideas and aspirations

embodied in the prophetic literature and Hebrew expectation in order to body forth and present before His own mind the task which the Father had given Him to do, so St. Paul employs the thoughts and phrases, which he had at his disposal, to express what had become his own relation, and would also become the relation of all believers, to Christ's finished work.

The experience of his conversion would, in the first place, powerfully impress the mind of St. Paul with the fact that he had been brought into the presence of God by no achievement of his own. He had been going the other way. He had been consciously and violently acting in bitter opposition to what he was now made to realise as the manifested power of God. The 'vision' on the road to Damascus was recognised as a phenomenon external to his own personality. He was convinced, with an assurance of reality that nothing in his subsequent career was ever able in the remotest degree to shake, that Jesus, who was crucified, and whom he himself would have been only too ready to join in slaying, was risen from the dead as the exalted Lord of glory. As such, Jesus had now

called him into living fellowship with Himself, and had assigned him his place and task within the kingdom. When he contemplated his experience as a Christian, that experience of a present salvation, which, if it did not cover all that is included in the word, was nevertheless the pledge and assurance of what was to follow, the apostle could only exclaim, 'By the grace of God,' by His free spontaneous favour, 'I am what I am.' Something had intervened in the midway of his career, for which he was himself in no sense responsible, the shining of a light above the brightness of the sun. God had indeed met with him. The whole action, beginning with the Cross but including also the revelation to his own soul of the exalted Nazarene and the baptism by which he had been joined to the society of His disciples and the fellowship of His Spirit, was recognised as the intervention of God on behalf of men. 'God sent forth His Son made of a woman.' Suffering, death, resurrection were the stages through which that Son passed on the way to the Throne. 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.' It is therefore by grace, by an unmerited act of God, that we are saved.

But, secondly, in his conversion St. Paul learned by experience what it is to be saved. Salvation meant access to the Father through Jesus Christ. And this, when viewed in relation to the past, was reconciliation. The change could only be called salvation in relation to that from which the Christian was saved. This was a life of alienation from God, not necessarily recognised as such prior to the revelation of the exalted Christ, but now known to be so by contrast. St. Paul could only surrender to the Crucified by acknowledging himself a sinner. He had persecuted the Cross of Christ. It had been the object of his bitterest hatred. If God is in Christ, then opposition to Christ is essentially enmity against God. From this proposition there is no escape. Along this road the apostle reaches those phrases by which he expresses this reconciliation. 'We have redemption,' he says, 'through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' The Son of God had loved him and given Himself up for him, and not only so, but He had actually called him in the midst of his sins. He was taken just as he was. No ransom for his past transgressions was required from him as the condition of his acceptance. He was translated by God's act, and not by his own,

into the 'kingdom of the Son of His love.' Therefore he could use at once the language of ritual, and declare that God had set forth Jesus as the propitiation for our sins. For it was through Christ that the love of God, obliterating the past, had in fact acted. And it was through death that Christ had been exalted to God's right hand. We are here dealing with facts, not with theories. One who had been converted like St. Paul was enabled to recognise that he had been estranged from God, whatever had brought about this condition ; and that he had been reconciled to God without cost to himself but with infinite cost to God. That is all with which for the moment we are concerned.

In the third place, no compulsion had been put upon him to enter into this state of salvation. His regeneration had not been involuntary, the result of a process of transformation which was independent of his own voluntary co-operation with the Divine Spirit. His own spirit had been active in response. The appeal had been a moral one, addressed to conscience. It had respected the freedom of his personality. And it had been met with an answer which involved the surrender of intellect, affections, and will. The

man identified himself absolutely and entirely with the mind and purpose of God as it was disclosed to him. There was, then, an active element in salvation, yet it was an activity that accepted but did not achieve. It was the holding out of the hand to receive a gift, the readiness to enter by an open door. St. Paul's response to the heavenly vision corresponded exactly to that analogy of the brazen serpent by which the Fourth Gospel represents the effect of gazing on the uplifted Christ. 'And it came to pass that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.' This is the act to which St. Paul has given the name of faith. He saw Christ, the crucified Christ, exalted in power. He heard the voice which he recognised as divine: 'I am Jesus of Nazareth . . . rise and stand upon thy feet.' He believed God, and that wonderful thing, which all his efforts to build up a 'righteousness' of his own had been powerless to achieve, actually happened. He stood, a living man, in the presence of God. Something more intimate than the attainment of a conviction that Jesus was the Son had occurred, which he expresses by the form of words which he employs in the Epistle to the

Galatians. God had 'revealed His Son in' him.
As the modern hymn puts it :

'My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine :
Now hear me while I pray ;
Take all my sins away ;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.'

Those lines almost seem to express what, as we study the Epistle to the Romans, we come to feel must have been in the mind of Saul, when in the Straight Street at Damascus he prayed and waited for the coming of Ananias. Then with the final act of obedience, when he is bidden to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins, faith reaches its consummation and like the first disciples at Pentecost he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus the work of Christ—the Mission of the Son, the Death, the Resurrection, the Exaltation, the dower of the Spirit—completes itself for the individual. It is a free gift. The intervention of God is no less absolute for the man than for the world. From the point of view of the alienated past it is the forgiveness of sins ; from that of the future it is

power. And the medium of this conversion is Faith.

The question, then, comes to be this. Does St. Paul rightly interpret an experience, which in its essence is universal, by calling this great change Justification, or is he falling back into the atmosphere of Judaism, and misrepresenting reality in his endeavour to score a controversial point against his unbelieving kinsmen? Now it may be admitted at once that the apostle starts, as he was bound to do, from the position of one who had been brought up under the Mosaic Law. Though it is clear to any attentive reader of the Epistle to the Romans that he thinks of law in a sense infinitely wider and more universal than the particular code which had been handed down from his fathers, yet the principle of his thought is derived from the ancestral covenant. He does see himself as one who has been striving by strict compliance with the terms of the covenant to prove himself worthy to eat bread in the Messiah's kingdom. He does contemplate himself as one who by conforming his life to the eternal law has been seeking to lay up a store of merit which may enable him to stand before God. Justification in the theological sense of the word

is God's verdict of acquittal passed upon the man's career, and Justification by Faith is this verdict of acquittal, given not in consequence of righteous acts performed by the man himself, but in virtue of the work wrought by Christ acknowledged and appropriated by the soul that trusts Him.

Now it will at once be said: 'Here you are falling back upon the language and ideas of the law court in order to conjure up a situation, which these very forensic metaphors exhibit as conventional and unreal.' Well, the phrase 'verdict of acquittal' has only been used in order that it may be withdrawn. Let it be admitted at once that it comes from a system of jurisprudence which is entirely absent from the mind of St. Paul, to whom trial by jury was an unknown institution. But this fact ought to show that the phrase is used, not because it is supposed that the apostle drew his ideas from legal practice, but because that practice embodies ideas which are also present in the mind of the apostle. It is no more to be supposed that the Epistle to the Romans conceived of man's relations with God as a sort of process of law, than that the description of God as a Judge is based

upon the assize court. But the administration of human justice springs necessarily out of those moral relations upon which all personal fellowship rests. And, though we know perfectly well that civil law and ethical principles never have been, or can be, identical, nevertheless a statute is a true analogy of an ethical principle, a breach of the former a real type of a violation of the latter. And where, as in the case of the Hebrews, we find a nation which regards itself as the people of God, a nation which is at the same time a church, there will necessarily be a tendency to blend the two conceptions of righteousness, the legal and the moral. Yet St. Paul does make the distinction. He sees clearly enough that righteousness before God is something broader than conformity to the Law of Moses. For when he speaks of this law, it is never the civil and ceremonial enactments of the Levitical system that are present to his thought, but those eternal principles of morality which are contained in the Ten Words or Commandments. These principles he clearly recognises as given in conscience. The Gentiles, who are without law in the sense of not possessing a written code, have 'the law written in their hearts.' They are no more

excusable for the refusal of this light than are the children of Abraham for disobedience to the written commandments. Righteousness, therefore, is those right relations with God, to which the inward testimony is a quiet conscience, and the outward witness conformity to the ethical ideals of the divine life.

What, then, is Justification? It has been already described as a verdict of acquittal. But a caveat has been entered against understanding this metaphor of the modern law court as though there were some legal reality corresponding to it in God's dealings with men. To justify means to account or reckon as righteous. So far as the term goes, nothing is implied as to the reasons for which this takes place. A man may be actually righteous, or he may only be regarded for the purpose in hand as though he were righteous. In either case he is accepted as righteous. This word 'acceptance' may perhaps lead us better than any other to see how the term Justification really does express the characteristic Christian experience. We speak of one person as being accepted by another. The members, for example, of an exclusive social circle agree to 'accept' new recruits for their

fellowship in consequence of their possession of certain qualifications, their *cachet* as the phrase is. But in this instance or in that they may for reasons, which are deemed sufficient, tacitly forgo these qualifications. The man or woman in question is accepted in the particular coterie and admitted to whatever rights and privileges spring out of relationship with it. And the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of Christians as 'accepted in the Beloved.' In virtue simply of their trust in Christ, their acceptance of what He has accomplished on their behalf, they find themselves 'accepted' by God, admitted in one fellowship to those personal relations with the Father, which carry with them the consecrating power of the indwelling Spirit. Now this acceptance is what St. Paul means in the earlier epistles by justification. This fact is just as real whether it is a definite pronouncement on the part of God or whether it is implied in those new relations in which the believer finds himself as a consequence of his faith in Jesus. St. Paul believed, took it for true, was convinced that he had been brought into living, saving contact with God through the exalted Nazarene. He had obeyed the heavenly vision. He had been

baptized into the fellowship of the Spirit, and was daily experiencing His power in reproducing in him the divine holiness. Here was the assurance that he was risen to a new life in Christ. He was justified by faith.

But, it will be said, if what the Christian experiences is the power of the Spirit, producing that holiness 'without which,' as the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, 'no man shall see the Lord,' why not be content with this? Is it not personal holiness which God requires? Why introduce this legal fiction of justification, and lead men to suppose that God is so indifferent to morality as to reckon as righteous those who in fact are not so? Here is the old bugbear of forensic metaphors. First of all we have to say that it is the experience which matters, whatever that experience may be, and the language even of a St. Paul is only important so far as it accurately represents that experience. But are we quite certain that in refusing St. Paul's idea of justification or in using the word in a sense which is not his, and making it equivalent to that process of transformation to which he would give the name of sanctification, we are not leaving out a crucial feature in that experience?

Justification is a legal fiction, you say. No, certainly not. If the minutes of a meeting, which have been previously circulated, are taken as read at the next meeting of the same body, that is a legal fiction. For the sake of formal completeness an event is assumed to have taken place which never did take place and never will. But nothing is more certain than that St. Paul held that something very real indeed happens to the believer when God justifies him freely by His grace, taking him for His own child by adoption. When he says that Christ died, the just for the impious, to reconcile us to God, he is speaking of a fact that he believes to be as real a thing for every man, who experiences it, as was the great change that occurred in his own life on the road to Damascus.

But, again, St. Paul does not so misinterpret his spiritual experience as not to perceive that the crucial fact of redemption, as it touches the individual life, is the reconciliation with God, out of which holiness springs. For he recognises that the activities of the consecrated life are the result of personal relations with God and not their cause. Of all moral action it is true that it has no existence whatever, except as a relation between

persons. How often do people think and speak of character as though it had some substance of its own, as though trust, love, long-suffering, and the rest of the virtues were ingredients of the human spirit which could exist by themselves. But we must trust somebody, we must love somebody, we must be patient with somebody, if any value is to be given to these qualities. They are activities, and activities are not substances but relations. This was how St. Paul read the Christian life. It was the active exercise of relations already existing between God and the believer, and it was through faith in Jesus that these relations had been established. Through that faith each member of the baptized community had access to the state of free favour in which he stood, to those influences of the Divine Spirit, the fruit of which was love, joy, peace. No higher salvation is conceivable than personal relations, what the apostle calls peace, with God. But that was exactly what he had gained through faith in the crucified Christ. From the moment, when God had 'revealed His Son' in him, he had been put in the position of the righteous man and been enabled to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Justification is, therefore, pre-

cisely the right word to express this change of relationship, the great covering fact upon which all holiness depends. In itself the term is purely declaratory, expressing a condition which actually exists no matter whether it has always existed or has only come to exist. But, then, what St. Paul says, and what every Christian experiences, is that God justifies through faith in Jesus. Apart from that faith, prior to that faith, there is no justification of life but only condemnation,¹ because, as the Christian knows, it is through Jesus and through Him alone that the right relations are established.

¹ I leave this sentence as it stands, in spite of its apparent severity, because it is what St. Paul says. There is 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' who have been made 'free from the law of sin and death.' But it must be understood that he is contrasting those who believe in Jesus with those who, like himself before his conversion, trust in the Law for salvation. The argument does not consign to condemnation all who have not formally accepted the historic work of Christ. This question was not directly before St. Paul's mind. We can, however, gather with sufficient clearness how it would have appeared to him. When, as we have noticed, he declares that 'the Gentiles, which have not the Law, are a law unto themselves,' he definitely puts the good Gentile in as favourable a position as the good Jew. And the 'good Jew' is the faithful son of 'faithful Abraham.' One of the most striking facts in the Pauline view of justification is the typical character assigned to Abraham's faith. This 'condemnation,' therefore, does not apply to those who, like the Hebrew patriarch, are 'Christians before Christ.'

VI

WHAT IS SIN ?

SIN is a fact of religious experience. It cannot be construed in terms that do not involve a theology. It means that the ideal, which men not only fail to attain but are found to oppose, is the holy will of a supreme Personality, and that the final need of human life is reconciliation with God. For us there is only one religion that matters, and the recognition of sin is part of the apprehension of Christ. For, as St. Peter tersely sums up the whole of Christianity, it is 'through Him' that we 'are believers in God.' This statement occurs in a context in which he gives expression to what from the beginning has been the characteristic experience of the Christian disciple. You have been redeemed, emancipated, liberated from your 'vain manner of life handed down from your fathers' with 'precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' That is the language in which he would have his

readers interpret the change which the knowledge of Christ had wrought in their lives.

It will be observed that the image or figure here employed is drawn from the phraseology of sacrifice. Over and over again, when they want to sound the depths of their religious experience, the writers of the New Testament have recourse to the same order of ideas. It would seem as though the language of ordinary human intercourse were totally inadequate to express that mediation which had established relations of friendship and fellowship between the sons of men and the Eternal Spirit. The terms of ritual and sacrifice were alone sufficient to express what they had received. St. Paul and St. John both speak of the Death of Christ as propitiatory. The Epistle to the Hebrews draws an elaborate parallel between the work of Christ and the sacrificial system of the Mosaic legislation. The earliest preaching of the Gospel, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, represents the Saviour as fulfilling the type of that suffering Servant of Jehovah, whose figure we believe to have occupied a prominent place in the thoughts of Jesus Himself, and who from the first had been intimately associated with sacrificial ideas as the

lamb led to the slaughter and bearing the transgressions of the people.

These ideas are not to be dismissed as superstitious and barbarous because they are associated in our minds with many cruel and savage rites of worship. 'Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' is a question that at once introduces us to a world of religious observance far wider than the covenant of Israel. The comparative study of religion is a science fruitful in the disclosure of principles of worship that recur at all stages of historical development. There are no doubt several ideas which have converged upon the institution of sacrifice. Even when men have not risen to the conception of a supreme Governor of the Universe, they have felt that behind the veil of outward things there exist Higher Powers, the relationship of which to mankind is even of more importance than the adjustment of the race to its external environment. These heavenly beings must be conciliated and made to look with friendly eyes upon the men who approach them as suppliants. Gods and men must become as brothers in blood by sharing each other's food, partaking of each

other's nature. But few primitive races seem to have proceeded far with the development of their sacrificial rites, before beginning to realise that obstacles stood in the way of the communion of the human with the divine, and that earth could only be reconciled with heaven if these hindrances to fellowship were removed. The darkest rites of heathen slaughter, the most barbarous provision of pagan victims, witness to a profound conviction, with which the heart of man has become possessed, that the Eternal is only to be reached by the mediation of some offering which shall cover a guilty past and make intercession for those changed relations which shall be the warrant of a brighter future.

But if sin only emerges into clear recognition with the development of religion, it would not be true to say that its shadow does not rest upon human life, even when communion with God is not put forward as the chief end of man. There is a striking passage in the introduction to Lord Morley's edition of the works of Emerson, in which the great English critic lays his finger upon the deficiencies of the genial American philosopher. 'Emerson,' is the criticism, 'has little to say of that horrid burden and impedi-

ment upon the soul, which the churches call sin, and which, by whatever name we call it, is a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man.' You will observe the use of the word *catastrophe*. It is the apparent difficulty of admitting the possibility of such an event in the history of mankind that is responsible for the superior attitude of many a modern man to what he conceives to be the traditional doctrine of sin. He uses the paradoxical expression 'a fall upwards,' because in those actions which are commonly called sins he sees only the inevitable result of the birth of moral consciousness. That conflict which is the normal experience of men appears in the light of a necessary, painful process whereby the passions of the animal nature are subdued to the spiritual personality. There comes a moment in human evolution when the higher interests of the race demand the restraint of those physical impulses, the satisfaction of which was at an early stage necessary to self-preservation. We must, therefore, either get rid of the notion of sin altogether, or, if we retain it, regard it simply as the blind and imperfect struggle to reach the divine.

Now it would appear that this argument pro-

ceeds upon an imperfect grasp of the problem with which we are dealing. We should begin by quarrelling with the use of the word inevitable. We need not say that nothing is inevitable, for that would postulate a knowledge of the universe which it is impossible for any man to possess. There are many things which for us are practically so, for as yet we have discovered no means by which to avoid them. But, nevertheless, life presents itself to us as a series of opportunities, of alternatives, of occasions for choice. When history has been made, and events have woven themselves into the web of cause and effect, nothing is easier than to assume that the pattern which has been thus woven represents the only possible course of events, and what, if we were speaking theologically, would be called the will of God. Even the gods cannot undo the past, said the old Greek poet, and it is not easy to escape from the illusion that what cannot now be otherwise, never could have been otherwise. But in all human affairs the possibilities of development are practically infinite. When what is now past was itself future, an accurate forecast of what has actually occurred was impossible. You

might predict that, if certain motives known to be strong, prevailed, certain results would ensue. But the desire to falsify your prediction might itself become the motive that turned the progress of events into a channel entirely unforeseen. It is of no avail to make the entirely unverified assumption that, under the guise of choice, there are hidden causes, the knowledge of which would enable us to anticipate the future with unerring accuracy. The alternatives of action are as numerous as the possible combinations of notes or words, which make each new composition, each new speech, or volume, not merely a rearrangement of facts but a veritable new creation. It is true that history can concern itself only with the forces which have actually made the past. But the most accurate analysis of the facts can only be a possession for ever as it is presented for warning or encouragement to those who to-day or to-morrow find themselves standing at crossways resembling in their several features those which confronted their fathers. Unless this is understood, the place of prophecy in the development of events will be misconceived. The prophet is a historian, and more than a historian. Not only has

he read the past, but his keen insight enables him to detect the operation in the present of forces to which others are blind. But his words do not control the future. It is only as they stimulate or restrain the activities of those to whom they are addressed that they fulfil their proper purpose. Choice is a creative power in human, if not in all evolution. It is only when we forget to interpret development in the light of consciousness that we fail to recognise this determining factor. A more exact analysis of experience has introduced us to a new philosophy of existence, which enables us to allow for the presence of this superior factor in the very heart of a developing universe. For it is now regarded as probable that man's capacity of choice is not the only rational power which controls from within the evolution of history, but that the same principle is present in forms of life which are apparently determined only by the play of irrational forces. We are face to face with a new and subtle teleology in which immanent and transcendent meet together. The universe is no longer conceived as a closed system complete in itself, the developments of which are like the changing patterns of a kaleidoscope. Rather, in

the ancient language of Heracleitus, all things flow. Existence is like a continuous stream flowing out of the past into the future, and the forms of things are given, not as Lucretius imagined by a fortuitous swerve among the rushing atoms, but by the exercise of choice, the free exercise of rational purpose, which is always making the future by adapting means to ends, directing or diverting the flow by its inner force or motion.

Now it will at once appear that such a form of evolution, as I have attempted to indicate, leaves room for those ethical postulates and moral distinctions which are the basis of sound practical activity and which transform change into progress. The theory, which explains the universe as an immanent life in constant process of change and development, is entirely destitute of moral values. There is nothing ethical in evolution. All depends upon the direction in which the evolution takes place. What is your standard? What do you want to make of the human race? Do you wish to produce prize-fighters or poets? It is obvious that your treatment of the stock will be very different if your ideal is a racer or a cart-horse.

Similarly you must have some conception of the goal of life, of some increasing purpose which runs through the ages, if you are to apply the conception of progress to the march of history. And if you do measure events by some such standard, what you will discover is not a steady, continuous, direct line of advance, but many tortuous windings, many blind alleys, many curves. All you can say is that on the whole there has been a tendency to approach the goal. This transfers the whole problem from the outward stage of historical sequences to the inner world of consciousness, of rational purpose and moral choice. I am bound to look at the whole drama of development, of which memory preserves the record, as something which might have been different if other purposes had been carried into action and other acts of choice had been freely made. I know that this is not the best of all possible worlds for the simple reason that I have had countless opportunities of making it better, which I have deliberately refused. Not only so, but my own past abounds in acts of will, which have changed for the worse not only my own environment but that of others, and for which not only do I accuse myself but I am held account-

able by my fellow-men. Nothing whatever is gained by attributing these activities to causes which are beyond my own control. On the contrary, the loss of a sense of responsibility decreases my efficiency and is calculated to make my existence a menace to the stability and advancement of society. The resistance of the dead material in which my inner force seeks to express itself is something wholly different in kind from the refusal of my will. To the former I may rightly give the name of necessity. Though I have no right to say that there is no sphere for the exercise of choice apart from the will of man, yet experience shows that for human wills, and possibly for those of other self-conscious and superior personalities, there are limits to freedom. But it is a denial of experience to apply this term to the exercise of a choice that, before it was translated into action, might have been different. It is playing with language to declare that, if I turned to the right, when there was nothing to prevent me turning to the left, I was in fact compelled by the structure of my being and its relation to the universe to take no other course than that which I actually followed. Choice, if it be neither arbitrary nor absolute, is

yet an independent factor in evolution. And 'the horrid burden,' to use Lord Morley's phrase, that lies heavy upon human hearts, is the sense, not that human purpose is frustrated in its effort after self-realisation by the resistance of brute matter, but that out of the same fountain of the will there issues bitter water as well as sweet; that the tower, whose top shall reach to heaven, is not built because of the confusion of language. There is something infinitely pathetic in this tremendous succession of wrong determinations of human will, which have strewn history with avoidable failures, and which we know perfectly well will continue to introduce an incalculable element of painful uncertainty into the noblest efforts for the amelioration of human society. Of nothing can we be more certain than the re-appearance in other lives of just those follies for which each one of us is least able to plead extenuating circumstances, and for which it is his high prerogative to accept fullest responsibility. If of every man we can predicate mortality, even though none can say that he knows why all that lives must die, so too we can assert even on the most slender experience of life that to err is human. We are sure that no

man, though he come from the ends of the earth, has an untarnished record and a conscience void of offence. Nor can we better describe this handicap of human endeavour than by calling it a catastrophe in the moral nature of man.

That catastrophe 'the churches call sin.' Or rather—for it is a religious and not a moral problem with which they are directly concerned—what the churches call sin becomes, for as many as receive the teaching, the explanation and ultimate cause of a catastrophe, the bearings of which only become fully manifest in Christ. I may have guessed that there was a root of bitterness in my life, which had nothing really to do with the circumstances of my existence, but Christ makes plain the secret of my misery. I am the disobedient son of a heavenly Father who loves me. The universal order, the moral ideal, the spiritual end of life are the expression of His Will, and my will is discordant with His. From His ways in the exercise of my responsible choice I have erred and strayed. My heart is not right with God's, as is God's with mine. Jesus sets forth reconciliation with God as the supreme need of men and women, and the experience of those, who have accepted His Cross

as the satisfaction of that need, attests the truth of His claim. It matters little how we represent this fact of our moral and spiritual condition, so long as we allow Christ, working along with the testimony of conscience, to show us that such is our relation to God, that all have sinned and come short of His glory. It concerns us not at all to know how we have fallen from grace, provided that we recognise the road by which we return to it. The occurrence of a Fall, considered as a definite event in the history of the race, is no less beyond our powers of verification than the hypothesis of a primitive revelation, considered as the source of our religious ideas, which found favour with Butler and others in the eighteenth century. What we do need to understand is that, if it is through Christ that we believe in God, then it is through pardon that we find peace, through cleansing that we attain to power.

There are three ways in which Christ convicts the world of sin: (1) by the testimony of His own consciousness, (2) by the proclamation of the Gospel, (3) by the personal experience of the Christian.

If 'the centre of religion is a real experience of God's presence,' can there be any doubt that

Jesus of Nazareth was aware of that contact in a degree peculiarly His own? It has been well said by a contemporary German writer that 'He preaches a new relation to God; or better, He brings, He represents that relation.' We are assured of this before we formulate any theological theory of His Personality, or define Him in the language of the Nicene Creed as 'very God of very God.' It is important to assert this, because what we ought to do is to examine the testimony of the Gospels, in order to ascertain what He felt and thought, quite apart from those preconceptions with which the worshipping Christian naturally approaches His Personality. The same student, to whom reference has just been made, has a notable passage in which he sums up what may be gathered from a careful study of the evangelical narratives.

'Without entering into the profound question of metaphysical speculation,' says Professor E. von Dobschütz, 'we may simply say that Jesus, according to His own words, felt this relation to God to be unique in Himself, and that He had no other means of explaining it and speaking about it than by calling God His Father and Himself God's Son. We may be sure He supposed that

the same relation ought to exist between God and every one else. But His refined moral sense must have discovered at a very early period of His life the difference between Himself and others in this respect, He Himself being in uninterrupted communion with His Father, while all others were separated from God by sin.'

And we may usefully set alongside this passage the words of another continental theologian, who no more than von Dobschütz represents traditional orthodoxy, and who in the immediate context has declared his dissent from St. Augustine's theory of sin, which has done so much to shape the language of subsequent statements of the doctrine. In reply to the inquiry, What is the essential meaning of Jesus for mankind? Professor Lobstein speaks thus :

'To enter into communion with Him is to be united to God Himself. If such is the expression of our faith, that is to say the affirmation of our experience, it is perfectly clear that the divine life, incarnate in Jesus Christ and imparted by Him to humanity, proceeds from a divine source; that it did not issue from the low depths of our sin-polluted earth, but that it is the emanation of a force, the ultimate cause and

secret of which we do not discover in ourselves. The personality of Him who was, and who remains for us the revelation and channel of the divine love, the personality of the Son of God stands out to the eye of faith as a new creation.'

What should be carefully noted is that here we have two German writers, both of whom would be described as Liberal theologians, declaring that Humanity in full communion with God, as it is pictured to us in the Christ of the Gospels, becomes at once a criticism of humanity as we know it in experience. We need not bring to the study of Jesus any official theory or elaborated doctrine of sin in order to assure ourselves that in manifesting God He unveils the evil of our own hearts. The language used to describe it is not the technical terminology of a developed system of doctrine, but the inevitable expression of observed facts, which produce such systems. Banish the theology of St. Augustine, and the statements of Christian confessions, and all knowledge of the Book of Genesis, and Jesus Christ would still convict the world of sin, which conscience proclaims as a fact, be the explanation of it what it may. And it is just the universality of Jesus' personality, its separation from all local

and peculiar conditions, its appeal to a conscience which I recognise as uniting me with my fellow-men and not dividing me from them, which enables me at once to assent to the universal proposition of St. Paul—‘All have sinned.’

We turn from the contemplation of the consciousness and personality of Jesus, as these are disclosed in the pages of the New Testament, to that proclamation of good news which was published by the apostles on the basis of His finished work, and is technically called the Gospel. And we find ourselves in possession of a message which assumes the existence of just such a failure as is denoted by the word sin. One of the passages, which I quoted just now, joined together the two sides of Christian experience, which can never properly be dissevered, the experience of the divine life as incarnate in Christ, and the experience of that same life as imparted by Him to the believer. We may indeed, all of us, catch something of the Master’s spirit by meditation on the marvel of His most holy life. All moving personalities possess that secret which we call influence, and which has its effect upon other lives even where the contact is indirect and imperfect. But you can never

explain Christianity simply as a system organised for the preservation of an inspiring influence, and leaving each disciple to connect himself as best he may with the central Personality. Here we must recall the argument of an earlier chapter. From the moment of the first preaching the biography of Jesus was subordinated to the announcement of His Death. 'We preach Christ crucified.' The Gospel meant in the first century, as it has meant ever since, the publication of a new and living way whereby those who recognised their separation from Christ might bridge the gulf and henceforth live in Him. 'Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day' is the succinct form in which St. Paul expresses that Gospel which he calls 'the power of God . . . to every one that believeth,' the message to be delivered to all whether they be Jews or Greeks. The call to repentance and baptism is the practical issue of the Resurrection, as St. Peter puts it in the Pentecostal sermon; and the promise attached to this venture of faith is this: 'Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' The very rite by which this new birth is visibly expressed involves the 'putting away of the filth of the flesh,' and as such symbolises a 'putting

off' rather than a 'putting on.' The physical analogies which are constantly employed—recovery of sight, healing of disease, liberation of captives—are meaningless if Christ is nothing more than the revelation of a higher life, and not the embodiment of the mercy of God ; if He is the Lord but not the Saviour.

And, lastly, the characteristic experience of the Christian, of the man, that is, who in the language of evangelical religion has found Christ, is the final and fullest assurance of the reality of sin. He has passed through a change—and the man who has apprehended his relationship to Christ, even when there has been no sharp and decisive act of conversion, is fully aware of it—that can only be described as the transition from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from death to life. It is a change not of outward environment but of inward consciousness. It may be that his own development, like the evolution of nature, has been the constant enlargement of opportunity, the continuous birth of fresh capacities—in fact all that is meant by organic expansion. But all this has in itself nothing to do with the moral and spiritual values of life. These can only be under-

stood and appraised when we turn the gaze inward upon the field of consciousness and choice, as they give direction, meaning, and purpose to the flow of external existence. This is where the change has taken place. It is here that the Christian disciple has experienced the new birth of the Spirit. Read, for example, the testimony, not of a disinterested observer of the changes of the world, but of a believer in Christ, whose own inward being has been transformed by the touch of His divine personality. It is a passage from the First Epistle of St. John :

‘ We know (it is the language not of formal doctrine but of personal experience) that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not ; but He that was begotten of God (he means Jesus Christ, whom he has acknowledged as the Word of the Father) keepeth him (this he has proved by that immunity from evil thoughts and wrong purposes and base decisions which has been his, so far as he was consciously trusting in Christ), and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God (that is, we Christians have become aware of a will in harmony with the will of God as revealed in Christ), and the whole world lieth in the evil one.’

There is no pessimism in language like this. To the Christian the words are equally true at every point in the development of history. They do not mean that there has been no progress in the evolution of the centuries, and, to use a popular expression, that the world is going to the dogs. But they do mean that the universe is good or evil according as it is directed by the choice of good or evil personality. They do mean that where the will of God does not prevail, the will which directs the course of the world is a bad one. All choice is not God's choice. This the soul that has sinned and has been pardoned knows from its own experience. And we may almost say that, just as the influence of the Divine Spirit, in which those who are in Christ live and move and have their being, shelters their personalities without annihilating their freedom, so, too, it is something more than a mere inference when such a writer as St. John sees behind the individual wills of sinful men an overshadowing power of evil acting, like the Spirit of God Himself, as spirit upon spirit. And St. Paul states the mission of the Gospel in perfect harmony with this world-view of St. John, when he speaks of the evangelist as

sent to turn men 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

The view of sin here attempted accords better alike with Scripture and modern psychology than do most of the traditional theories. Theology has been too ready to express its meaning by reference to the physical analogies of heredity and disease. These analogies fail in several important particulars. They do not touch responsibility. They treat sin as a quality inherent in character, not as a wrong relation between persons. They restrict it, or at least our view of it, to humanity instead of regarding it as a great fact of the spiritual order, of which the failure of man to respond to the Will of God is only a particular case. They represent the sin of the race as a cause of the sins of men, rather than both as aspects of one thing.¹ We shall not go far wrong, if in this matter we are content to take conscience and Christ for our primary instructors.

¹ This will be better understood when the reader reaches the argument of the eighth chapter. See especially pp. 216 ff.

VII

GOD IN THE SINNER'S STEAD

WHY should I object to call Christ my substitute? Why should I find it hard to acknowledge that I owe everything to Him? Why should I hesitate to say that He died instead of me? There can be no doubt whatever that the difficulty which underlies these questions is responsible for the resentment with which a great many modern men regard any attempt to offer for their acceptance that old-fashioned Gospel, which was the moving power of the Methodist revival, and which some of us can remember as the inspiration of Mr. Moody's preaching more than thirty years ago.

The fact is that the distortion of evangelical truth is as much the work of their own minds as of the theologians and religious teachers whose 'immoral' doctrines they are quick to criticise. We shall readily allow that the language, in which Christian experience finds expression,

becomes, or ought to become, a more accurate representation of the truth, which it is intended to convey, as each generation of thinkers is able to observe what is rough, mechanical, and inexact in the intellectual statements of its predecessors. If we are to retain continuity in our apprehension of 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' we are not thereby committed to the defence of every formula, every figure, every illustration which our fathers have employed in their endeavour to convey to other minds the sense of entire dependence upon Jesus Christ, as the author of their eternal salvation. We do not defend the term 'substitution.' Let it go, if you will. Only beware that the story of the New Testament is not divorced from the interpretation which has been put upon it by the apostles and their companions, to whom we owe its preservation. The significance we attach to it should have some recognisable relation to its original setting. Our attitude towards Christ must be that which, under all differences, has been characteristic of His disciples, if we are to be recognised as heirs to the Christian name.

Now what those who scornfully reject the notion, as they would call it, of Christ's vicarious

sacrifice, forget, and what those, who have not hesitated to use the strong language of 'substitution,' assuredly did not forget, is the background against which the oblation of the Cross must always be viewed. The preacher cannot be perpetually reviving the whole picture of the love of God as it is manifested in Jesus Christ. He cannot be always guarding his utterances against all the misconceptions which are sure to arise, if his presentation of one aspect of the Atonement be considered apart from every other; if his sentences be torn out of the whole context of Christian doctrine. The evangelist, who speaks to-day about the grace of Christ, may have spoken yesterday of the love of God, and may discourse to-morrow on the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. He is interpreting the one fact of Christ in different relations. He is dividing for the purpose of intellectual apprehension what in the experience of life is one and indivisible. This ought to be recognised as elementary, but it is continually forgotten. And thus, what is the very pith and marrow of the preacher's own joyful trust, is returned to him as though it were a scandalous doctrine subversive of God's love and destructive of moral life !

But what is the truth ? In the first place, *Christ is God*. That is the core of Christianity, the article of a standing or a falling Church. If you cannot make this acknowledgment, then, of course, the whole question of an atonement goes by the board. To say that Christ died for the sins of men becomes under these circumstances not only immoral but unmeaning. The very terms in which the doctrine of reconciliation is stated imply the primary Christian confession. The teachers, who are the butt of the superior modern critic, necessarily assume the postulate of the Deity of Jesus. If it were a Channing or a Martineau who had constructed such a theory of the work of Christ, he would indeed be chargeable with the monstrous opinions that are freely ascribed to the older evangelicals. But these are the very men who would never have dreamed of presenting such a Gospel. They are not able to say that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' Or, if some of the older members of the Unitarian School, who to a certain extent shared the attitude towards Scripture which was current before the days of the Higher Criticism, might have felt it incumbent upon them to adopt the language of St. Paul, because

it was Biblical, they would have subjected it to an interpretation that the present age would find no difficulty in admitting to be strained. But no preacher of the Atonement would hesitate to say that the work of Christ is redemptive because it is an activity of God. He would not, of course, deny that it was God acting under conditions of humanity, but none the less he would unreservedly regard it as the direct action of the Divine Being. You must state the doctrine in a way which no Christian would consciously tolerate, if the consequences alleged are to be represented as arising out of it. You must put forward Christ as a 'third party,' intervening between God and the transgressor, either a sinless human being interposing on behalf of the sinful, or an angelic being mediating between God and man, if this preliminary objection to a substitute is to be upheld. Now St. Paul, adopting the rabbinical view, did say that the Law, which could never take away sin, was 'ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.' The meaning of this is that the Law was on the heavenly side the operation of angels, on the earthly side the work of Moses. The value of this speculation we need not discuss. But we

must point out that in this sense there was no mediation in the work of Christ. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, 'He took not upon Him the nature of angels.' It is to destroy all the presuppositions upon which the Reconciliation of the Cross has been ever preached, if we are not to take it as axiomatic that Christ is God, that the Son became man.

We are bound by that confession to ascribe salvation to the infinite love of God. But Christians will always recognise a true part of their experience in the words of that Eucharistic hymn, which breathes the devotion of thousands of loving hearts :

'Look, Father, look on His anointed Face ;
And only look on us as found in Him ;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayers so languid, and our faith so dim ;
For lo ! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son, our Lord.'

What is the 'reward' here indicated ? Surely it is the Father's displeasure. The whole run of the stanza makes this plain. We deliberately say, then, when we thus plead Christ's Death, that between our sinful selves and the Father, who cannot look upon us as we are, we place, as if it were a covering, the Atoning Work of His Son.

Now Christians believe that the historical revelation, which culminates in the Cross, implies a mystery in the Being of God. Those, who are interested in pursuing the subject further, may do so in Moberly's *Atonement and Personality*. All that we can now say is that, when it is the Eternal Son who offers Himself without spot to the Eternal Father, the ethical objection to a propitiatory sacrifice vanishes. There is no 'transaction' to which God is a party, but a 'purification of sins,' which takes place within Himself.¹ On the other hand, where an 'offering for sin' is actually made as part of the Divine Act of love, the moral repugnance of the human spirit to a forgiveness which fails to 'make good' the offence also disappears.

It would be trespassing upon another field of study to open up in any detail the Christian doctrine of God, that is, of His triune Personality. It is enough to say that this doctrine makes room for that double view of the Atonement, which characterises the New Testament. Christ at once comes forth from God as the gift of His Love, and offers Himself to God as

¹ Cf. 'I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure!'

Tennyson, *The Passing of Arthur*.

the sacrifice for sin. What is really at fault in the matter is our defective imagination. But modern thought should at least help us to understand the interpenetration of personality. God is in Christ. Christ is in God. St. John could say not only that Christ is at once a manifestation of the love of God and the propitiation for sin, but that the latter was the evidence of the former. 'In this was manifested the love of God (the Father) towards us, that God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

It is not, however, necessary to go so far as this for our present purpose. Before and beyond all theological definition, the broad distinction between those who are believers, and those who are not, consists in their attitude towards Christ. Do we, or do we not, place Him on the side of God? This is the way in which Dr. Denney puts it, and it is broadly true. All rationalising heresies have, as a matter of fact, been ruled out on the score that they put Christ on the side of ourselves, or, to use the older method of expression, make Him a creature. This was, as Athanasius clearly saw, to make redemption impossible, and so to deny the essential Christian

experience. The point here is not how we relate Christ to the Godhead, considered as a whole, but whether we allow Him to fall outside the circle of Deity or include Him within it. If our view is expressed by the latter alternative, then we regard His Manifestation in human nature, His Death, and Resurrection, as a Divine Action, comparable, not to the words and acts of human beings, which in a secondary degree may manifest God, but to the works of Nature through which God acts directly. We are therefore not concerned with distinctions within the Godhead when the question simply is whether the Passion is a work of God on our behalf. We may be content with the clumsy refusal to draw distinctions at all, which is the meaning of the early heresy that it was the Father who suffered. We may refuse to dogmatise altogether with respect to the place of the personality of Christ within the Godhead. We may adopt that doctrine which has proved itself to be the only way in which clear thinking can convey the twofold impression of Christ's personality, as God and yet dependent upon God, and so speak of Him as the Second Person in one undivided Deity. In any case it is God who takes the sinner's place and becomes

his substitute by doing on his behalf what he cannot, if he would, do for himself.

But we shall not stop there. This further must, at least, be said. The distinction with which orthodox theology has differentiated the Father and the Son, far from qualifying the Death of Christ as an exhibition of the eternal love, by seeming to imply a pardon wrung from an unwilling God by means of propitiatory pain, magnifies and enhances it. The verdict of mankind will never excuse the mother who saves her own life at the expense of her child. That means that the representative mother, who in this matter is the typical parent, is required to make a sacrifice, greater than that of her own life, if she is called upon to surrender her son. When she gives him up, she tears out the life of her life. And it has always been characteristic of evangelical preaching, as it is characteristic of the New Testament itself, to make its strongest appeal to the gratitude of sinful men by reminding them that God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ; that God so loved the world that He gave, not Himself, but His only begotten Son ; that herein is love, that God sent His Son. When people glibly criticise the

doctrine of the Atonement on ethical grounds, we do well to remind them that the preaching of it involves the most tremendous moral appeal that the mind of man can conceive. It is nothing short of this, that the living God has torn out His very heart in order to redeem them. If that be true, there is something well-nigh profane in the suggestion that Christ was not our substitute.

But, secondly, to call Christ our substitute is only to insist on what every Christian believes, that Redemption is a creative act. This may be only another way of saying that it is a divine act. And yet it is necessary to look at it from this point of view in order that its true relation to our own activity may be duly apprehended. The writers of the New Testament realised very vividly this aspect of redemption. It was just because the work of Christ toward them was perceived to possess the characteristic quality of the divine activity that they were able to call Jesus Lord. 'Created anew in Christ Jesus' is the phrase by which St. Paul expresses the experience of a Christian. And the assertion of the Fourth Gospel that 'through Him all things were made' is another mode of proclaiming that Jesus is the channel of a redeeming activity

which can be described as nothing else but a renewal of the work of creation.

Now creation is the word by which we endeavour to express the truth that all things ultimately depend upon and arise out of the will of God. We use the idea illegitimately if we introduce it, as is repeatedly done, either to modify our conception of facts or to excuse our own conduct. The action of the Creator moves in a different plane from the operation of natural causes or the free activity of human personality. The former we can only come to know by the patient use of observation and experiment. In the case of the latter it is only a sophisticated conscience that will evade responsibility by distrusting the practical evidence of self-determining choice which consciousness affords. Physical science and psychological analysis are unaffected by postulating a divine Author of the universe. But as soon as we turn from the past to the future, from facts as they are to the use which we are to make of them, from life as it has been received to life as it is to be lived, at once it becomes necessary to take a wider sweep of the universe, and to ask the fundamental questions, or, which is the

same thing, to look for final causes. Then we need the great conviction that 'it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves.' We want the sheltering presence above us, the everlasting arms beneath us, the guiding hand before us. In other words, we require a basis for life, a motive for action, a purpose that has been beforehand with us, a spirit that reacheth from one end to the other mightily, a rational will to support and uphold our own. We discern an ethical necessity of 'substituting' God for ourselves, of falling back on His creative action, of identifying our weak effort with His predestinating power. God thus becomes everything and we ourselves nothing. All is He and in Him. A great God-consciousness takes the place of a world- and self-consciousness. Reality, consciousness, personal identity are all precisely what they were before, and yet God is all in all. That God made me and all the world does not alter the fact that I am what I am and the world is what it is. The validity of the ordinary methods of inquiry is not impaired by the acknowledgment that God created the heavens and the earth and formed man after His likeness. But the Creator is present, as it were, all along the line.

I do not owe this or that to Him, but everything, my very being.

And that is exactly what the Christian owes to Christ. St. John actually uses this category of regeneration and new birth. We see the kingdom because we have been born anew of the Spirit, 'Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world.' In St. Paul there is the same idea of a creative act, but resurrection to newness of life rather than birth into the spiritual kingdom is the form in which he presents it. What he sees between his present condition, with its full, rich, spiritual experience, and his former manner of life among his own nation, with its disappointing failure, is his contact with the risen Christ. He had seen the Lord, or, as he expresses it in the Epistle to the Galatians, God's Son had been revealed in him. And this he recognised not as in any way arising out of his past, but as being an act of divine favour. God had personally intervened. He had not developed into a Christian. His life, with its fresh outlook and untried capacities, was a new creation. And, inasmuch as the Death on the Cross was the road by which Christ had attained this power of quickening the lives of others, it was not

unnatural to speak of the Cross, the Grave, the Death, as though they had been shared with the believer. 'I am crucified with Christ,' 'buried with Him in baptism,' 'baptized into His death.' These expressions do not mean that Christ's experience was typical of ours, or that it becomes ours by being communicated to us, or even that His sufferings were in some sense representative. What it does mean is that these facts of the Gospel story, culminating and issuing, as they do, in the Resurrection, are all part of that creative action of the living God, the last result of which, as it concerns and touches me, is the appeal of the glorified Jesus to my spirit and the revivifying of my own soul.

Now what am I to call this but substitution? None of the other words which have been employed to represent the relation of the work of Christ to what I recognise as my salvation are at all adequate to express the truth. My own voluntary, personal action, though it is in no sense neutralised by God's creative power, is nevertheless subordinate to it and fulfils itself within its range. Denials of the doctrine of substitution, made though they be in the interest of morality, inevitably tend to minimise, if not to

annul, the claim of Redeeming Love to intervene as God in the recovery of man. They replace it by a philosophic theory of the Son of Man as the consummation and head of the human race, the pledge of a penitence and ethical recovery which has yet to work itself out in the several members. When I speak of Christ as my substitute I do not imply that His obedience excuses and condones my disobedience; that the punishment which He received anticipates the sins I commit; that His Death alters the values of morality; that goodness, righteousness, conscience, repentance mean something different in the case of the upright heathen and the believer. Nothing of the kind. What I am really trying to say is that, while I recognise a true continuity in the whole of my career, yet the difference between what I was before Christ came into my experience and what I am to-day can only be described by such strong figures as darkness and light, death and life. Speaking from the vantage ground of my present condition I can only say that 'whereas I was blind, now I see,' and can only attribute this to a fresh momentum, so to speak, of that creative action of the holy and powerful love of God, which has always been

underneath my life, and which has now been exercised towards me afresh in my Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yes, and this further. I know something of the pain which it cost my mother to bring me into the world. I know nothing of what it cost God to make the world. Sometimes in that part of Haydn's great oratorio, in which the composer describes the emergence of this ordered world out of confusion and chaos, I receive a suggestion of the pain and suffering, the infinite sacrifice of love, which may have been involved in God's creative activity. However this may be, I cannot be wrong in accepting as set to my account, and rendering high praise and hearty thanks for, all that lies behind my own existence, all that God has done, all that is as much the antecedent condition of my thoughts, words, and actions as my own spontaneous purpose and deliberate aim. Yet, inasmuch as creation is anterior to my own experience, I cannot in the full sense of the word say that God took my place. But how different is it with Redemption, which is wrought out upon the stage of history and reaches me within my conscious experience ! When I look at Christ I see all that is neces-

sary if man is to attain what the Bible calls reconciliation with God, what our older religious philosophy describes as resurrection or new birth, and what, if we prefer the jargon of a modern psychology, we may call life on the plane of the higher thought centres. I see that it means nothing short of a passion, an agony and bloody sweat, a death, yea, the death of the Cross. It is only when He has gone through with all this that Jesus comes to me as my Saviour, that God's work of creative redemption begins for me. I see then that Christ has done what otherwise I must have done for myself, but what, in fact, I could not have done for myself. I could not have suffered on Calvary. Christ was crucified for me. We need not dispute whether the payment of debt is a literal statement of what Christ did, or whether it be merely a figure, so long as it is recognised that He stood in our place and so became our substitute. It is this which makes Christ Crucified an ethical motive of the highest power. 'This have I done for thee; what hast thou done for me?'

One other point remains to be considered. We have spoken of the various theories of the Atonement which have sometimes been put for-

ward as alternatives for the doctrine, assumed to be unethical, of vicarious sacrifice. Sometimes we are told that it is not so much what Christ did, as how He did it, which really matters. This not only ignores the real point of the problem but creates an antithesis which is entirely false. It is like explaining the existence of Shakespeare by analysing his genius. Attention is diverted from the Passion considered as a process in history to what we may call its psychological value. This, no doubt, is strictly in conformity with that well-marked trend in modern thought which analyses the idea of Personality and records its manifestations. Thus we hear of the perfect obedience or the vicarious penitence of Jesus. Or we find the atonement resolved into the complete union of God and man in the person of our Lord. All these views seem ultimately to take us back to M'Leod Campbell's powerful and inspiring treatise on *The Nature of the Atonement*, which marks an epoch in the development of religious thought. The immense value of this school of interpretation cannot be doubted, nor is its work by any means at an end. The impetus, which recent psychology has given to the doctrine of

Personality, and the new spiritual vistas which have been opened by it, are a pledge of the influence which these views will still exercise. But God's act initiates. He did it !

We may sum up, perhaps, the truth, which is more or less discernible in the theories thus described, by pointing out that they emphasise the representative character of Christ. His work is held to be ' vicarious ' because it is representative. His obedience, His entire conformity to the mind of the Father, His realisation of the meaning of sin so vivid that it is scarcely an exaggeration to call it penitence, anticipate because they quicken the same affections in those who are one body with Himself. The language of St. Paul, when he declares that God accounts the sinner righteous, is held to be admissible, because God looks on the ungodly not as they are but as in Christ they will become. At the same time it must be admitted that the emphasis of this teaching falls somewhat differently from that, for example, of the Epistle to the Romans. Mutual indwelling rather than personal relations is the thought which governs this theology. It falls short of the truth that God has reconciled the world to Himself. God did it !

While, therefore, there is both truth and power in this representative theory of Christ's work, it is none the less inadequate. It begins too low down. It is so fully occupied with the method of substitution that it ignores, when it does not explain away, the fact. So far-reaching is Redemption that our view of it ceases to be in the full sense of the word Christian, if it does not attempt to embrace all its leading aspects. It arises in the love of the Father. It is accomplished through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It issues in the fellowship of the Spirit. In these days we are sufficiently alive to the moral danger of forgetting the Fatherhood of God. We ought, I think, also to realise that a theology, which insists on the forgiving love of God without reference to the Cross of Christ, as the channel through which alone it takes effect, is no less blind to the ethical necessities of the situation. A careless God would be as unreal as a cruel one. Neither one nor other would be God. The danger of limiting our view to the third aspect, the resulting spiritual transformation, is lest we should get out of touch with the personal relations involved in the work of Christ and lose ourselves in a mystical philosophy. We

must beware of abandoning our Gospel in contemplation of its method, or in admiration of the gift ignoring the Giver.

What is meant by beginning too low down in the consideration of Redemption may, perhaps, become plainer if we look first of all at the older sacerdotal form in which its practical issues have been presented. The sacramental system has been offered to men as the way of salvation. Christ has been viewed as the giver of a new law, the founder of a new covenant of means, the bringer in of new ordinances of grace. Redemption has been made to consist in Baptism, Confirmation, Absolution and the Holy Communion. 'This do, and thou shalt live.' Only those, whose prepossessions are predominantly ecclesiastical, will fail to perceive that there is no vital relation between Christ and the institutions of Christianity, so long as they are represented as a new law given by One who, if He be greater than Moses, is a legislator still. It is salvation by acts and things rather than by intimate relations with a Divine Person. But the way to meet such teaching is not to deny the validity of centuries of Christian experience or roundly to declare that the Church is nothing and sacra-

ments less than nothing. On the contrary we have only to mount a step higher, and the true relation to the living Christ of what must otherwise degenerate into magical superstitions, becomes abundantly evident. These things are efficacious, not because Christ chooses to make them so, but because they are vitally united with Himself. The same is true of the Cross. We must begin by realising that it is God's free act. Christ was our representative in the sense that He has become immanent in humanity, the source of an inflowing Spirit, the promise and potency of a change that is active in all those who are incorporated into Him. If this were not so, we might be entitled to regard a salvation, which depended on the substitution of another, even of God Himself, for the sinful children of men, as unethical in its conception and immoral in its results. But that is not, and never has been, the doctrine of substitution. It is necessarily subject to the whole view of Redemption as it is unfolded in the New Testament. Christ is never presented as an isolated, self-enclosed personality, but always as a transforming, uplifting, regenerating influence. On the other hand the tendency

of all theories of the representative Christ, if they be allowed to usurp the place of a Christ who does a work instead of us, who dies on Calvary and rises again that He may restore personal relations between the Father and His sinful children, is to become unethical in another direction. Personal relations are something that must be acted upon and accepted before we proceed to a philosophical analysis of the idea of personality. Moral relations either between man and man or between man and God require that sharp distinction between individuals which is the basis of ordinary social life. It is only as we are able to view it in this connection that the work of redemption is seen as a spontaneous act of God towards us, which constitutes an infinite claim on our gratitude and love, and becomes a powerful motive in our lives. The developments of immanental theory in the direction of what is popularly known as New Theology show how easily an adequate basis for moral responsibility may disappear, when full significance is not readily accorded to the facts of the Gospel as a Divine Atonement for the sins of the world apart from its issues in the renewal of mankind. An eternal Christ, who is not properly distinguished

from the Spirit of God indwelling humanity and who is not first realised as personal Saviour, appeals to the philosophic more than to the religious mind. We must never allow ourselves to forget that union with Christ means for the believer companionship with the personal Jesus. It is the presence of Him, who died and rose again, that we seek in the brotherhood of the Christian society. His influence upon our spirits, transforming us into the same image from glory to glory, is the effect of personal intercourse. 'We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' Fellowship of the Spirit is not the condition of ultimately reaching the Presence of God. To have access to the Father through the Redeeming Work of Christ, achieved on Calvary, is the condition of growing into the Divine Likeness. We are sons of God, not through anything which we ourselves can work out, but by faith in Christ Jesus.

Redemption is fundamentally an act of the personal love of God which lies behind the series of acts which restores His image in those whom He brings back to Himself in Jesus Christ. It is His forgiveness, freely conferred upon those who did not deserve it, which sets in

motion the whole process by which the Eternal Son is enabled to offer a representative sacrifice, to become immanent in human nature, to express (if that be a true reading of His relation to human sin) a vicarious penitence, and to recreate His own character in those who through Him receive the adoption of sons. He is our substitute, not because His goodness is accepted instead of ours, nor because His virtues excuse our vices, but because He establishes those personal relations with God which are the antecedent condition of holiness.

VIII

SALVATION IN THE CHURCH

THE divorce between evangelicalism and churchmanship, which has too often been a conspicuous feature of the religious developments of modern times, has no warrant in the Christianity of the New Testament. The great hero of the Reformation, Martin Luther himself, tells us in his blunt and arresting manner that the Church is full of salvation. And it is, perhaps, the result of historical circumstances more than of the difficulties inherent in the many-sidedness of truth, that those who have felt most powerfully the attraction of the one have deemed it almost a point of honour to minimise, if not to denounce, the other. The moral objections, which are urged against the teaching of free salvation, disappear when its corporate character is realised. And the Church no longer appears as a dead system when once we have grasped the thought that Christ is the Saviour of the body. We are

right when we perceive that the distinctive note of the religion of the Cross is the reconciling intervention of God on behalf of sinful men. We are wrong if we emphasise this action at the expense of human nature itself by denying the catholic, universal, social method by which this end is achieved.

The fact which on the day of Pentecost St. Peter had to interpret to the pilgrim crowds at Jerusalem was at one and the same time the experience of individuals and the endowment of a community. Those who were speaking with tongues had not first of all to explain themselves to one another before they could establish a bond of association and incorporate themselves into a church. Nor, on the other hand, had the Church any existence independent of the individuals who composed it. The gift of the Spirit was both immediate and common. The apostle at once recognises in the brotherhood of inspired men and women the realisation of the Messianic Kingdom. If in times past holy men had spoken as they were inbreathed by the Spirit, it was nevertheless true that God had always dealt with men as members of a race. No Jew, with the history of Israel behind him, could

doubt this essential mode of divine action. Prophets and kings had been representative of their people. The life, which belonged to the whole nation, welled up, so to speak, in those who were most capable of receiving and manifesting it. The greater its intensity, the more completely did those, who became aware of it, identify themselves with the common heritage. Pentecost, therefore, was the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, that is, not upon select individuals but upon the whole community. Those who were thus set prophesying were its sons and daughters. To it belonged the young men who saw visions, the old men who dreamed dreams. St. Peter conceives of those, whom he exhorts to repent and to seek the remission of their sins, as saving themselves from an untoward generation by incorporation into the society of the redeemed. They are to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Their experience is to be as intimate, as individual, as separate, as that of each disciple upon whom the tongues of fire had lighted in the Upper Room. Yet they are not only to repent but to be baptized. The power is not to be independent of membership in the community. Most significant is the account of St. Peter's dealing

with the household of Cornelius. A hasty glance at the narrative might convey the impression that the Redeemer deals separately with each soul without any mediation through the Christian society. The Holy Spirit fell upon these Gentile believers, as on the apostles at the first, without their incorporation through the normal outward rite with the original brotherhood. But that is not how St. Peter interprets the event. If the manifestations characteristic of the community of Jesus have reappeared in these believers, that is a witness to the fact that they belong to it, and necessitates their baptism, 'Can any man forbid *the water*?' The circle, so to speak, must be completed, even though the external form succeeds, in this instance, the inward gift. 'They have received the Holy Ghost as well as we.' For St. Peter and his apostolic companions there is but one act of reconciliation, one remission of sins, one quickening of the Spirit. The good news which he delivers is a gospel of the kingdom.

The first epistle, which bears his name, supports and elaborates the teaching implicit in the preaching of Pentecost. The conception of the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the living

temple, which the apostle had inherited from his forefathers, is vividly presented to his readers as the spiritual outcome of the sin-bearing of the Cross. It is this community which has been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this society which has been bought not with silver and gold but with precious blood. The individual Christian derives his relationship to the Lord from the fact that he is a living stone in the spiritual house of which Christ is the corner stone. It is 'the people of God' who have obtained mercy, whose sins Christ bore in His body on the tree, whose redemption has been freely wrought by the Death and Resurrection of the Saviour.

Thus for Peter, the disciple of Jesus, as for Simon, son of John the Hebrew, personal experience and race experience were two aspects of one thing. His own redemption was simply the collective redemption actualised in himself. The forgiveness of his own sins was the individual realisation of the begetting again of the nation. It was not in any sense a transaction between God and his own soul apart from the restoration of the people. His Gospel thus involved a quickening, and not a deadening, of the ethical

sense. The First Epistle of St. Peter is full of morality, because the salvation of which he writes is, to borrow the language of Jude, a 'common salvation,' because faith towards God necessarily involves that love of the brotherhood, which is the transfiguration of ethics. So St. Peter insists upon the example of Christ; upon the observance of elementary human duties, upon chaste behaviour, courtesy, humility; upon fervency of mutual charity.

St. Paul, no less than St. Peter, wrote all his theology in view of the fact that the Christian community was the proper object of salvation. It is of the utmost importance not to lose sight of this, because it is just the Pauline theology, or what has been deemed an exaggeration of it, against which the charge of immorality has been most confidently levelled. Justification by faith, and by faith only, is not a late invention of Lutheran Evangelicalism, but only the statement in its broad and naked simplicity of what St. Paul actually means when he declares that by a free act of God's favour, in sending His Son to die, the just for the unjust, we are given the adoption of sons. It remains for us only to accept the recovered status which the work

of Jesus Christ on our behalf affords. But then there is no separate reconciliation. The faith of the individual is not distinct from that of the community, which is, so to speak, implicit in it.

A few brief considerations ought to make this perfectly clear. Where, for example, have we a more complete theology of the Church than in the Epistle to the Ephesians? It is here that we find the eloquent and familiar passage in which St. Paul speaks of the Church as the spouse of Christ. 'Christ,' he says, 'loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it.' It was the Church which He cleansed 'by the washing of water with the word.' This language applies to the community all that he has ever written about grace and faith, about justification and redemption. And, even if other aspects of salvation are more prominent throughout this epistle than in the Epistle to the Romans, the repetition of phrases, which seem more properly to belong to the earlier doctrine, makes it evident that he is not here developing a new theme, which has no immediate connection with the former teaching. 'In whom we have our redemption through His blood'—'by grace have ye been saved through faith'—'not of works, that no

man should glory'—do such sentences as these belong to Romans or Ephesians? They are all found in the latter. The connecting link between the two sets of ideas is given in the second chapter, where St. Paul is speaking of the peace established by Christ's atoning work between Jew and Gentile, through the demolition of 'the middle wall of partition' and the consequent enlargement of the divine society. Both are reconciled *in one body* through the Cross. Through Christ both have their 'access in one Spirit unto the Father.' Individual salvation has a social background. It is for the race, and for the individual only as a member of the race, that Christ is a substitute. It must thus always be borne in mind that when St. Paul disparages merit he is not thinking on the plane of ordinary moral activity, that is, of human intercourse, but on the higher level of the relations existing between God and the human race. That this universal view was present to his thoughts at the earlier stage of the Epistle to the Romans is equally certain. The doctrine of Christ as the second Adam, that is, as one whose relation to every man is dependent on his relation to all, though it is

more particularly associated with the argument concerning the resurrection of the dead in the contemporary First Epistle to the Corinthians, is yet definitely represented in Romans. It underlies the statement that, 'as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.' Again Baptism, which is the rite by which persons are incorporated into the visible community of disciples, is explained in this epistle as identifying the recipient with the Death of Christ. This can only be because it admits the believer to the fellowship of the society, which is primarily the object of redemption. And the duties of social intercourse, the morality of daily life, are enforced on the ground that we are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And these obligations are enhanced by the very principles of the Gospel. For the gift of the Spirit, which is the common heritage of all who in the one body have received the adoption of sons, supplies the energy which enables us to correspond to duties. We ought not to continue in sin. We ought to walk in newness of life.

Churchmanship is thus not something superimposed upon the gospel of atonement, much less is it an alternative conception of what Christian discipleship means. On the contrary, it is implicit in the very method by which reconciliation is effected. Nor does it involve any modification in the terms in which that Gospel is stated. Faith is none the less faith, even if it be primarily the faith of the society rather than of its individual members. Justification remains justification even if its object in the first instance is the community. Nor are the relations of the soul with God any less immediate and direct because of the social fabric in which they are established. The reason of this is that the Church is not a *tertium quid* interposed between the personality of the believer and his Redeemer, a thing which divides no less than it unites. The true analogy is that of creation. There is no inconsistency between the direct dependence of every life upon God and its derivation from the kind to which it belongs. It is equally true to say that God made me, and to speak of my being as derived from my parents.

This method of salvation, as it appears in the

teaching of the New Testament, finds ample illustration and confirmation in the best thought of our own day. We are learning to take a much wider and more universal view of experience. In times past the word has seemed to suggest something which is entirely subjective and individual, as though each man could only look for a criterion of truth within his own breast. But we have come to see that, just as the physical organisation of each human being locks up within it, so to speak, all the stages of man's physiological development, the bodily constitution of the individual being the epitome of the history of the race, so private experience throws us back upon the experience of the society, which is none the less objective because it is inward. Behind what I think and feel and will are the thoughts, the affections, the determinations of the family, the nation, the race. Truth is apprehended by the universal spirit rather than by the particular. This does not mean that the individual can rest in any judgment which finds no answer in himself, but that he keeps his own personality ever open to the correction, the enlargement, the influences which come to him from without, and trusts

his own experience in so far as he recognises it as the embodiment or reflection of the universal. If Athanasius for the time being finds himself *contra mundum*, yet in the long run he will be justified by history. It is only an illegitimate authority which seeks to establish itself at the expense of Liberty. But it is still true that there is one thing greater than Liberty, and that is Authority. Or rather the complete exercise of Authority and the perfect enjoyment of Liberty are attained simultaneously, and are but two aspects of one life. For Authority in its true sense is not an external force compelling submission, but the personal life of the whole community, which comes to its own within the several personalities of its individual members.

This principle, when looked at in relation to our salvation through Christ, is found to be protected by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Evangelical truth as published by the apostles invariably included the gift of the Spirit as the essential experience of believers. Forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of Jesus was never published apart from the promise of the Spirit, as not only an accompaniment, but the seal and assurance of Redemption. Reconcilia-

tion with God was not possible without it. The adoption of sons had no meaning apart from the shedding abroad, in the hearts of those who received it, of the Spirit of the Son. The preaching of Pentecost was the interpretation of this personal experience of a common Life with which the community of disciples had been dowered. The liberty wherewith Christ makes free, though dependent for its realisation in every instance upon the faith of the individual, is nevertheless, viewed from above, the incorporation of each into the one divine heritage of all. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' But the effect of justification is to walk in the Spirit, to be led by Him, to be taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus. A narrow and undisciplined individualism is the last description that may appropriately be applied to the life in God.

This is what enabled St. Paul to see in the historical facts of the apostolic community the existence of that body which is the essential organ of the Spirit. He never identifies the organisation of the primitive community, nor yet the federation of churches, with the body of which the Spirit is the creative life. This would have destroyed the whole conception, and sub-

stituted a mechanical for an organic relation. It would have been to shackle and confine the Spirit, not to provide it with a medium through which to manifest a growing and expansive life. His analogy is always that of the material organism through which physical energy works, which it increases and modifies by its own inward force. But what he does see in the nexus of church life, which is coming into being in all parts of the world, is ligaments of supply, channels through which the Spirit is making for Himself a diversified unity wherein to manifest His Presence. There is ever the one, unchanging Personality which nevertheless, like a human being, grows in stature and in that enlarging fulness of realisation which corresponds with outward growth. Apostles, pastors, teachers—and we may complete the list, which is here only begun, by adding all those agents and agencies, ministers and ministries, including Scriptures, creeds, and the like, which make up the manifold equipment of the Christian society—are instruments necessary to the building up of the fabric. There is, or there ought to be, alike in the individual and in the community, a continual increase and expansion into the divine

life, a progressive realisation of personal relations with God in Christ, both reaching their perfection through mutual influence, through the action and reaction of the one upon the other. Fellowship is the keynote of the whole method of the salvation of man.

Let us try to understand what this ought to mean in regard to Christian experience. Here is a man, let us say, who has been brought under conviction of sin, and by faith in Jesus Christ has received the assurance that his sins have been forgiven. This is the typical evangelical conversion. Whether this truth with regard to his personal relation to God has been flashed upon his consciousness in a moment of crisis or represents the slow growth of years, it is all one. The man has been justified by faith in Jesus and realises his communion with God. Now let us suppose that this same man goes on to recognise the need of fellowship in the Church. Is it some entirely distinct experience that he is to expect from hearing absolution pronounced by the lips of the minister or taking part in the celebration of Holy Communion? Is it some novel realisation of the Divine Presence or a different kind of assurance with respect to

the remission of sins that reaches him through these channels? Certainly not. The New Testament knows nothing of any union with God in Christ that is not capable of being expressed in the familiar language of the first eight chapters of Romans. 'By grace ye are saved through faith' is the simple formula, which is wide enough to cover the whole range of the Christian life. What he has done is to realise more explicitly what is really involved in his redemption by Christ. In the fellowship of the believing society he is entering more deeply into the fulness of a free gift, which is all the more certainly his, because it belongs to the whole, of which he is an integral part. Nor is the experience any less immediate and direct because it is now consciously gained in a social environment. The man is rising in Christ towards the perfection of the Gospel, when the Saviour shall be fully formed within the redeemed society, and the consciousness of the redeemed society fully reproduced in that of the believer.

Nothing is more instructive than the way in which the New Testament works the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion into the tissue of its gospel. They are not made the

subject of an independent teaching, as though they opened up an entirely new department of Christian theology, but they are introduced quite naturally, as occasion requires, into the heart of evangelical doctrine. If those who, since the Protestant Reformation, have emphasised the broad, personal lines of Redemption, have failed to see the important place occupied by these characteristic rites in the economy of the apostolic Church, it is no less the fault of those, whose religion has reacted in a catholic direction, to treat them as though they possessed a theology of their own. The result has been that separation of thought which has made justification by faith and sacramental grace almost inconsistent views of the way of salvation. The evangelical has almost come to believe that a catholic cannot accept the freedom of salvation, while the catholic has found it difficult to accept the plain meaning of the epistles which speak of righteousness as accounted rather than imparted to the believer. This cleavage can only be avoided by starting from the point of view of the New Testament itself.

It is quite impossible to deny that Baptism occupies a prominent place in the thought of

St. Paul. It is, for example, introduced into the midst of his great argument concerning justification in the Epistle to the Romans, when he has to meet the startling objection to his theory of salvation, that it seems to suggest continuance in sin as a condition of free grace. 'Are ye ignorant,' he suddenly exclaims, 'that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?' Observe that he does not say 'were baptized into His life.' That is how we might have expected him to speak. You have been made partakers of the life of Christ. Use, therefore, the new life. But the point he wishes to make is a different one. When you were baptized, he argues, you died to sin. That one decisive act in your history corresponds to the Death of Christ, who, in that He died, died to sin once. Baptism, he says, identified you with Christ's Death. Now this is precisely what, as he has contended throughout the preceding pages, happens when the sinner is justified through faith. Consequently, St. Paul closely identifies the baptism of the Christian with his justification by faith. He is, as the subsequent language of the Creed declares, baptized 'unto the remission of sins.' Thus the two actions, the

inward response of faith to the free favour of God and the outward baptism with water, are so closely related as to be practically synonymous. What becomes clear is that for St. Paul, when the believer identifies himself with Christ's atoning work, he does so, not as a single individual entering into separate relations with the Saviour, but as the member of a society corporately reconciled. The thought of the Epistle to the Ephesians is already present in St. Paul's mind. Whatever may be said of such as accept Christ, where baptism may not be had, it is yet true that normally incorporation into the Christian community is the consummation of those personal relations with God which faith achieves. There is no idea of a mechanical efficacy in the baptismal ordinance. But none the less the converted man must, as St. Paul himself had done, 'arise and wash away his sins,' because believers are 'reconciled in one body.' Baptism enters into the case, because the mediating society is an ever-present factor in salvation. And when, as in the case of the abandonment of sin, the mind necessarily dwells on the 'newness of life,' the new environment in which the justified sinner henceforth walks, the par-

icipation in a common spirit of sonship which is now his, the substitution of Baptism for Justification in the argument is both natural and illuminating. A believer who rejected baptism, or who, having been already baptized, refused all significance to the action, would be in imminent danger of falling short of that communion with God which is only granted to each as it is accorded to all. Does not the same thought underlie the teaching of the First Epistle of St. John concerning the love of the brotherhood which is vitally connected with the love of God ? ‘ We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.’

The conception of fellowship in religious experience, which is fundamental to the Christian sacraments, governs, not only the passage with which we have been dealing, but all the doctrinal references which St. Paul makes to the rite of baptism. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is the instrument of the one Spirit whereby we are all united in the one body. It is because the Spirit, like the sunlight, is a universal creative life that a body with links and bonds of union is necessary for its manifestation. The common

experience of the Israelites, when they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, is an analogy of the corporate salvation of the Christian host. The same thought is present in the Epistle to the Galatians. Faith in God through Jesus Christ, as compared with the particular discipline of the Law, is broadly universal and human, uniting instead of dividing mankind, obliterating the distinction between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. 'For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.' It is as though the exercise of faith involved corporate action, as though a solitary and isolated acceptance of Christ were a thing impossible. 'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' To believe is in its essence a corporate act, involving a linking up of individual believers in one overshadowing society of faith. To fall back upon the language of First Peter, baptism saves us, not because it is the channel of a life unconsciously received, but because 'the answer of a good conscience towards God' is a corporate act. The Faith of the Church confirms, energises, and interpenetrates the faith of its members.

There are not the same frequent references to Holy Communion diffused throughout the apostolic writings as is the case with the other sacrament. This is no doubt partly accidental. The occasions, when it would be introduced naturally as illustrative of the matter in hand, do not happen to be so numerous. But there are also obvious reasons for this reserve. The primitive Christians were, as we know, not ready to speak openly of the characteristic mystery of their common worship in documents, which might fall into the hands of those who were not members of their brotherhood. And the very fact that its repeated celebration was at the first inseparable from membership in the Christian assembly would tend to prevent rather than to promote its discussion as a separate Christian institution. But when, as in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, it is brought into prominence by the particular nature of the difficulties with which St. Paul has to deal, we discern the same note of fellowship in the Gospel which has already been struck in regard to baptism. The social quality of a common meal is immediately apparent. 'We being many are one body' follows from participation in the same food.

‘We are all partakers of the one bread.’ But, once again, this common privilege is no addition to the inheritance which we share as Christians, no gift superadded to that personal communion with God which is involved in the terms of our discipleship. It is not as though, already united to Christ by faith, a new and further gift, only explicable in relation to this particular rite, were conferred upon us in the Lord’s Supper. On the contrary the institution of the Eucharist, as understood by St. Paul, concentrates and focuses the one gift. Nor does he speak as though his interpretation of it were anything but what would immediately be recognised by every member of the brotherhood as expressing his own view of its relation to the Christian life. It is an epitome of salvation.

St. Paul says that, as often as Christians eat this bread and drink this cup, they ‘show the Lord’s death.’ They do so because the circumstances, under which the sacrament was inaugurated, ‘on the same night that He was betrayed,’ connect it inevitably with the Atonement. But this is no more than is proclaimed by every believer in virtue of his life of faith, and for the same reason. In the Fourth Gospel

our Lord is represented as expressing the relation of the disciple to His sacrificial Death in precisely the same language which applies to the Holy Communion. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves.' It is because the believer stands in this intimate relation to Christ's Death on his behalf that his life becomes a proclamation of the Atoning Work. And it is in the same evangelical language that St. Paul explains participation in the Lord's Supper. He narrates the facts of the institution. 'On the same night that He was betrayed He took bread . . . He took the cup.' This intimately connects the means of participation in this sacred rite with the Act of Redemption. Those who receive the bread and wine, as the apostle has already explained in the preceding chapter, have fellowship in the Body, fellowship in the Blood. Thus the Communion introduces just that element of union one with another into the continued life of faith which Baptism connects with its inception. The continuation of the believer's justification, and that sanctification which is its other aspect, can no more be conceived apart from the society than its beginning. And normally, at any rate,

this is secured by the Eucharist. If we cannot confine communion with God to the narrow channel of the Sacrament, we can at least, with full confidence that we are following the lines of apostolic teaching, bid the Christian man to 'take the safeguards of salvation here.'

Churchmanship, then, is nothing else but the normal life of the Christian. Man is formed for society, and the personal life of each individual is naturally lived in the companionship of his fellows. It is an inexorable law of the human constitution that none lives to himself and none dies to himself. The solitary does not escape the bonds which unite him to his kind because he refuses as conventional fetters the rites through which his social character finds its proper exercise. What he succeeds in maiming is the fulness of that individual personality which he has sought to guard. Nor is the religious man, who would make his spiritual life a matter between his soul and God, really independent of the mediating fellowship of the Church. The Christ, through whom reconciliation with the Father is achieved, is after all a social Christ, the Head of a redeemed race, the author of a universal salvation. Nor can the

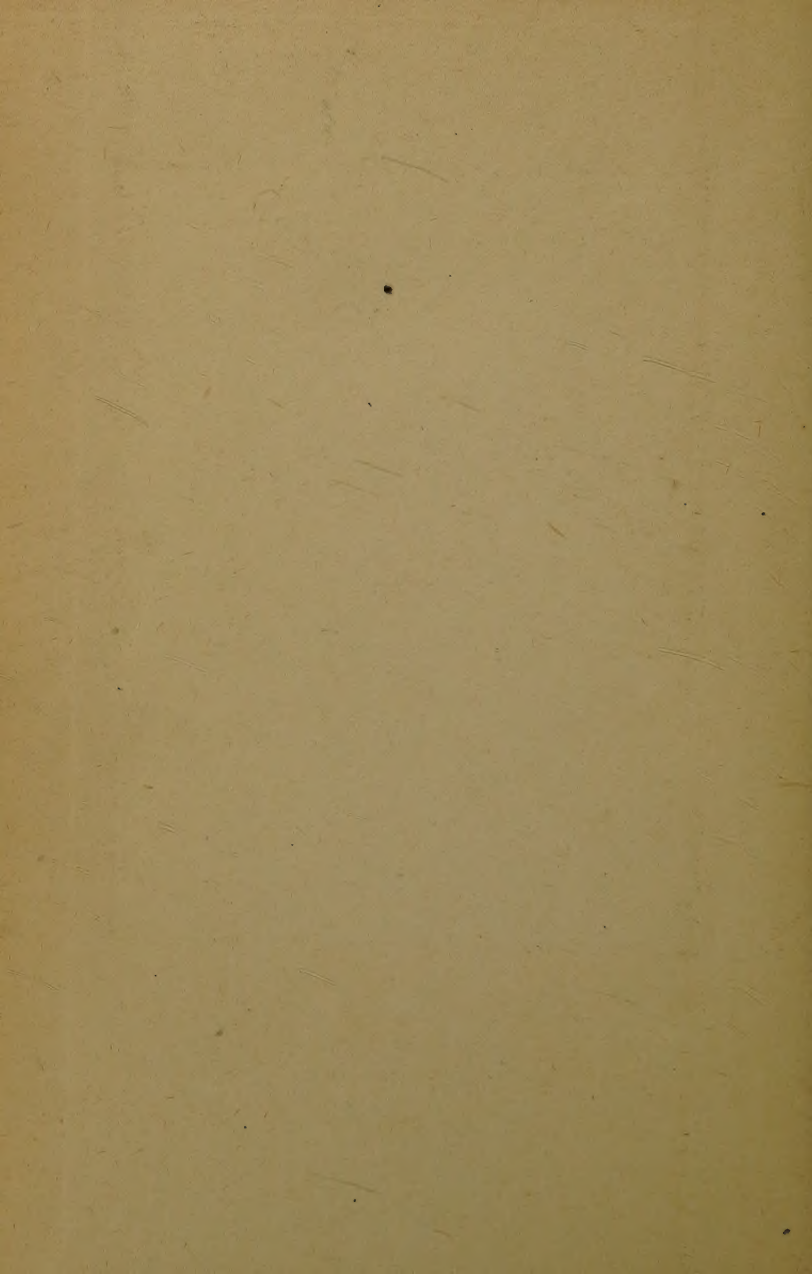
individual soul find itself in touch with this redeeming Personality save through a Gospel preached by others, a tradition which has reached him through historical sources. 'I delivered unto you,' writes St. Paul, 'that which I also received.' The Churchman, therefore, rightly understood, is not one who puts the Church in the place of Christ, but one who consciously realises this corporate element in redemption, and avails himself of all those ministries that unite the brotherhood in the fellowship of grace. He does not confuse Christian institutions with the Temple of the Lord, which is not made with hands. But he sees in them efficacious instruments divinely appointed for the perfecting of the saints in one body. Faith in a crucified and risen Saviour is not impaired but deepened in proportion as they that believe are 'of one heart and soul,' not counting any of their spiritual possessions as their own, but having 'all things common.'

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

500 EAST 5TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty,
at the Edinburgh University Press



232.3R

Simpson, J. G. D.D. Si 58

What is the Gospel? or

232.3R

Si 58

O

